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# Guilford Review

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Number One



# **GUILFORD      REVIEW**

## ***ON      CERTAINTY***

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In order to facilitate faculty dialogue, especially across disciplinary lines, and to make it accessible to the entire Guilford College community, we are beginning this new journal, the **Guilford Review**. This first issue is focused on the theme of "Certainty" which has already been the subject of lively debate among several faculty over the last several years issuing out of the "Being Human in the 20th Century" course. More recently a Faculty Colloquium was held for the college community to further this conversation. Here now in print are the papers that lay behind that discussion, augmented by poetry and art. That the invitation to make articulate our diverse views on certainty should have elicited the involvement of thirteen faculty, not to mention the sixty people who participated in the colloquium, augurs well for the future of this review. It is our expectation to have two issues a year, published at the end of each semester. Next fall the second issue of the **Guilford Review** will be devoted to the subject of mythology.

R. Melvin Keiser  
Editor

### A PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

In my search for small clues to  
categories, maps, indices to  
life, liberty, and the pursuit  
of man, woman, fortune, *et al*,  
I came across a Cross-sign  
hanging at a drunken list so  
that it directed indirectly,  
swaying at the whim of winds  
or of mischief playing pranks  
upon the unprecautious. When  
finally caution and chance and  
hope had all been exhausted in  
false starts and dead ends, I  
took the sign wood and built  
a fire to warm myself with  
while I pondered the problem.

*John Pipkin*  
(Religion Department)



DE RERUM NATURA  
(On The Nature of Things)  
– Lucretius

That's the way it is  
in Eden, Lucretius:  
An apple falls, and there  
is no Newton here  
to say which way  
and also none to tell us why  
Eve cannot take a bite  
without the seeds.

*John Pipkin*  
(Religion Department)

**E=mc<sup>round</sup>**

The worm in Newton's apple said:  
"The universe is round and red.  
It swells to ripen, fall, and rot."  
(He knew a lot that Newt knew not.)

*Ann Deagon*  
(Classics)

**SURE YOU'RE SURE**  
**A Socratic Dialogue Held in a Hemlock Refinery**

*by*  
*Sheridan Simon*  
*(Physics Department)*

Dramatis Personae: J. Alfred Heretic, an atheist  
Richard M. Foxhole, a believer  
N. Vine Veritas, a logical positivist

The scene opens with no one on stage. The curtain is up but the scenery is heavily shadowed. Bulky but not easily identifiable structures are stacked about. Heretic, Foxhole, and Veritas enter from stage left.

Heretic: Hit that switch.

(Veritas gropes around. A light goes on, but not very bright.)

Foxhole (sitting down): I am personally pleased that we have all decided to get together to thrash this thing out once and for all.

Heretic: And finish off this God nonsense—once and for all.

Veritas: I'm not so sure—

Foxhole: Well *I am*. (Turning to Heretic): Very well—I would like you to explain to me where the universe came from. That's one question that my critics have never been able to answer to my satisfaction.

Heretic (sneering slightly): The universe didn't "come from" anywhere. It's always been, always will be, world without end—

Foxhole: We all know very well that what you say is without doubt impossible. It is perfectly clear that everything must have a beginning.

Heretic: Oh, yeah? How about a circle, for example. No beginning, no end.

Veritas (breaking in): But when you draw a circle, you have to start drawing it somewhere, don't you?

(Both Heretic and Foxhole turn to him and raise their eyebrows. Heretic turns toward Foxhole again, smiles slightly, and winks.)

Foxhole: I am sure that is irrelevant. We should endeavor to preserve the intellectual level of this discussion. (Turning back to Heretic) When one draws a circle, one must start drawing it somewhere, musn't one?

Heretic (Waving his hand at Foxhole): Take a spherical surface then, dammit.

Foxhole: It certainly must have been started *somewhere*, don't you agree? It is impossible for something to have no beginning. It is absolutely inconceivable.

Veritas (breaking in again, a little flustered): But doesn't that mean God had to have a beginning too, if there's a God? Who created God?

Heretic (frowning): Why did we bring him along?

Foxhole (apparently thinking): To turn on the lights and such, I believe. He can work with machinery—good with his hands. You know.

Heretic (sniffs): Listen, buddy. Just because *you* can't conceive of something existing for an infinitely long time doesn't mean there can't be something like that. The universe is filled with things people don't understand. Atoms, for example.

Veritas (thrusting forward a forefinger and opening his mouth as if to speak): B—

Foxhole: Suppose I could give you absolute, certain proof that the universe had a beginning. A definite starting point in time before which there was nothing.

Heretic (carefully): How could you do that?

Foxhole: Never mind. Suppose I were able to accomplish this. Describe your subsequent reaction.

Heretic: There's no way you could, of course. I'm sure of that. But even if you could, that doesn't mean God exists. The universe could have happened by accident.

Veritas (rising): Cause and effect—

Foxhole: Then call the "Accident" that I describe, the "Accident" that caused the universe, "God." I am sure it won't choke you.

Heretic: Then the "Accident" said "Thou shalt not commit adultery", right? Followed by nine other moral statements. You won't trap me that way. Show me your proof that the universe had a beginning.

Foxhole: Very well. (He reaches into a pocket and pulls something out, handling it reverently) I have a proof more powerful than any other. (He reads carefully) A proof beyond refutation . . . "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth—"

Heretic: The *Bible*! How can you believe that!

Foxhole: It's the Word of God. I think you can believe that, because God never lies, and he's always right. He never makes mistakes—

Heretic: And never has "Accidents?"

Foxhole: No! (Tosses down Bible) I mean, unless He means to. If you won't believe that kind of evidence, what will you believe?

Heretic: Nothing! There is nothing to believe in, believe me.

Foxhole: I am sure that is utter hogwash. Anyone can be convinced that God exists. Even this idiot (gestures at Veritas, who is picking his nose).

Heretic: I'll believe that when I see it.

Foxhole (Turns towards Veritas): Have you understood any of this?

Veritas (thinking): You guys have decided that if the universe had a beginning then God exists?

Heretic (Glances at Foxhole and taps his skull meaningfully, then looks back at Veritas): Yes. If there was a definite time that everything began, before which nothing existed, then I would be willing to call whatever caused this universe to start God, if it will make this character happy. I'll make no concessions whatever as to what this "God" did afterward, though. OK? (looks at Foxhole)

Foxhole (frowning slightly): Now wait a minute. I believe it is possible that when God created the universe he deliberately created it to look as if it hadn't been created—

Heretic: You can't back out now! I'll agree to say that Something caused the universe to happen if, and only if, you give me irrefutable evidence that the universe had a beginning. (Points at Veritas) Evidence even *this* jerk can understand.

Foxhole: Now *wait* a *minute*—

Heretic: You said "any idiot", didn't you? Yes? (Foxhole nods, regretfully) Then proceed!

Foxhole (angry with himself for being trapped): Well. (Turns to Veritas) Have you any thoughts on how the universe began?

Veritas (haltingly): Well, measurements of distant objects show that they are moving away from each other, and that they are also moving away from us . This is certain.

Foxhole (groaning): So?

Veritas: The universe is expanding, getting bigger and bigger all the time. It's spreading out. You watch; it gets bigger.

Foxhole (beginning to get excited): Aha! So it used to be smaller in the past?

Veritas (nodding like a yo-yo): Yes! This is sure to be true!

Foxhole: And smaller and smaller and smaller as you go further and further and further back?

Veritas: Yes, yes, yes! This is a clear consequence of the measured laws of motion.

Foxhole (rigid index finger pointed skyward): Then there must have been some time in the past when *everything* was in the *same* place!

Veritas (keeps nodding): This is surely true.

Foxhole (very excited now): And everything isn't in the same place now (looks at Heretic)—is it?

Heretic (looks around carefully): No—but—

Foxhole (triumphant): There are no "buts" about it. Something made it start expanding. Admit it!

Heretic (looking frantic, gestures wildly at Veritas): What could he possibly know about it; (His face clears) Listen—what was it doing before it started expanding?

Foxhole: Nothing! There was nothing there! Nothing!

Heretic (gestures at Veritas): I'm asking *you*.

Foxhole: What does *he* know about it?

Veritas: One of two things must be true.

Foxhole: Come on! How could you know about anything like that?

Veritas: Why, you look for measurable evidence. It's simple.

Heretic: Well?

Veritas: Either it started out small, or it didn't. If it didn't, then it had contracted to that state from a previous expanded state. These are the only two possibilities.



Heretic: And which was it? It had contracted, right?

Foxhole: It started out that way, right?

Veritas: It would depend directly upon the amount of mass in the universe. If there were enough, its gravity would be powerful enough to slow and eventually stop the expansion. Eventually, therefore, it would start collapsing again, until it is once more small and dense. Then it would recommence expansion, starting the cycle again. If the mass were too small, gravity would never stop the expansion. All of this is firmly based on measurements of gravitational force.

Foxhole: Then if there is too little mass in the universe, it will never recollapse, right?

Veritas: Yes. Measurements of gravitational force make that certain.

Foxhole: And in that case, the universe had a definite beginning, right? Because it couldn't have collapsed after a previous expansion.

Heretic: But if the mass is big enough, it will collapse, right? And that means it used to be expanded long ago, and collapsed, and expanded again to the present situation, and will eventually collapse again, and so on. Over and over, as it is and ever shall be—

Veritas: Yes.

Foxhole (to Heretic): You know, when he's like this I can almost forget what a knurd he really is. (To Veritas) We can't both be right. Which is it? How much mass is there?

Heretic: Enough, right?

Foxhole: Not enough, right?

Veritas (silent for a while): It has never been measured accurately.

Heretic: Which is it? (Grabs the front of his shirt) Which?

Veritas: It is not certain. (All are silent. Foxhole develops a tic in his left eye.)

Foxhole (finally speaks, to Heretic): What does he know?

Heretic (a bit abashed, but not much): Yeah. Let's get out of here.

(Exit Heretic and Foxhole, slowly, stage left. Veritas stares after them for a bit. He sighs. He pulls a flask and a shot glass from his pocket, measures off precisely .08 liters into the glass, and gulps the shot. He wipes his mouth and sighs again.)

Veritas: Sic transit gloria mundi. (He looks toward stage left)

(He turns off the light and shambles off after Heretic and Foxhole. In the darkness he stumbles over something on his way offstage.)

## A PRAGMATIC SORT OF CERTAINTY

by

*Rex Adelberger*

*(Physics Department)*

Since I can remember being interested in and learning about science, many an argument was laid to rest by invoking some property of that marvelous thing known as the atom. The history of the atom is long and distinguished, beginning in early Greek times and reaching fulfillment in the physics of the 20th century. The atom is so cloaked in respectability that I wonder if I dare ask: "Does the thing really exist?" To answer this question let me first take you on an excursion to the foundations of physics.

The world which physics attempts to describe is sometimes known as "Physical Reality"; that part of the universe which can exchange energy with some other part, hence becoming measurable. To measure some property of the universe amounts to being able to count it. I measure the length of an object by counting the number of meters from one end of the object to the other. A surprising result of many years of investigation is that there are only a few physical things that one can really measure: mass, length, time, and electrical charge. These four things are the "yard-sticks" by which truth is established. These measurable properties are the only qualities of the physical world about which I am unquestionably certain. When actually making a measurement of one of these qualities to get a number, experimental uncertainties arise, questions about how well to believe the answer. This question of certainty is unlike the one mentioned before, the question as to how a scientist is certain something exists. The statistics of experimental uncertainty is a well understood field.

Atoms are neither length, nor time, nor mass, nor charge. They are not one of the things about which I am directly certain. They reside in the world of the abstract, they are only models of reality. There is no direct way of verifying that they exist. I cannot measure an atom.

This concept of certainty can be continued into the domain of abstract ideas (such as atoms and electrons) by claiming that an idea is "true" or unquestionably established when logical predictions concerning directly measurable quantities are verified experimentally. When the model is used to make logical predictions concerning measurable events and these events are not found experimentally, the model is no longer certain.

A well recognized and accepted (by physicists) consequence of such a definition of certainty is that those models about which I am certain are dependent upon the current state of technology and upon which experiments have been done. Newton's mechanics was a model of physical reality about which most 19th century physicists were certain because the experiments that led to contradictions had not yet been done. The "untrue" theory of Newton led to a technology that gave the experimentalist the tools to show that the theory was wrong. The future of physics is dependent upon its past; a form of evolution in scientific thought is always taking place.

If the only way that a model can be checked is to look at some of the experimental consequences (all would be better, but quite unrealistic), what guarantee do we have that the atom is the only model that could be invented to describe physical reality? A number of great minds have studied this question. There is no reason to believe that atoms are the only possible model of physical reality other than that it works. There are physicists actively involved in searches for other models, some bordering on quackery and others quite respected.

A consequence of the revolution in ideas about the nature of physical reality that took place in the

early 20th century is the Correspondence Principle. It asserts that if any new model is devised, it must reduce to the old model in the domain where it was found to be certain. If one is willing to restrict the domain of some models, they may remain certain for ever. A series of fragmentary models, however, is not the game plan of physics. The search for understanding will continue until a few or one simple model is found that describes everything in physical reality. Another interpretation of this statement is that the search for knowledge known as physics probably will never end.

The quantum world, abstract mathematical models invented to extend Newton's mechanics, is a truly magnificent thing. It surely ranks among the intellectual wonders of the world. Unfortunately this model is quite removed from the realm of our usual experience. Because of this, many of the concepts seem "impossible": particles with mass but no size; things that can exist at two different places, but never in-between them. There is nothing wrong with an implausible model, as long as all the logical consequences of that model lead to measurable results which are verified experimentally. An example of such a consequence is that celebrated principle first created by Werner Heisenberg, but now known to be a logical consequence of some of the basic assumptions of quantum mechanics. For some unknown reason it is referred to as the "uncertainty principle". The name is poorly chosen because this principle leads to predictions that have been directly measured. Apparently the physical world behaves in the manner predicted by the "uncertainty principle". I am certain about this principle.

Atoms and quantum mechanics are a certainty at this time because there are no predictions resulting from this model that have not been found in nature. The mathematics used in making quantum mechanical predictions about events seen at the edge of the state-of-the-art of technology is exceedingly complex and difficult to do. This is almost a replay of the history of science circa 1890. Technology, hence experimental information, is being assembled far more rapidly than logical predictions about them can be made. There seem to be places where quantum mechanics (and its foster child—the atom) may not work: the world of elementary particle physics. The largest appropriations for research in physics are on this front. The work done at Fermi Labs in Illinois and CERN in Geneva is very exciting.

Any theories that may arise out of the new experimental discoveries (once again due to the technological advances made using atomic theory and quantum mechanics) will be created in the wild and wonderful world of genius, the intellectual environment of the great thinker, the world not described by physics.

The atom is really an idea, invented in the complicated electrical network known as the brain, perhaps inspired by God. It is found to be certain because it works. It will continue to be certain as long as it continues to work. When used properly, the model of the atom has so changed man's environment that he no longer has to spend all his waking time working just to find food and shelter. He now has time to ponder such questions: "Am I certain that atoms exist?"

## A SECOND UNCERTAINTY PRINCIPLE

by

Theodor Benfey

(Chemistry Department)

I. What am I certain of? That day will follow night, tomorrow. However I was more certain of that two thousand years ago—I think. Modern science has sown some doubts, making me hesitate before I bet on it absolutely. Of course I may not be here tomorrow—of my own survival the next twelve hours I am much less certain. My father died of a heart attack in his sleep—though admittedly he was a bit older.

What am I certain of? The laws of science—yet they are ideal laws, obeyed in the absence of confusing extraneous factors. In a sense they are man-made, a product of man's cogitation; we have carefully defined the conditions under which they will be observed. But most "real-life situations" don't fit those conditions. Galileo's law of falling bodies was not obeyed by the rocks dropped (by others) from the leaning tower of Pisa. Only rocks falling in a vacuum do—but where do you find rocks falling in a vacuum? Only in a few museums which have set themselves the task of demonstrating the validity of Galileo's law. In the technical museum in Munich, you can see feather and stone falling at the same rate.

What am I certain of? Of those things that I take for granted without thinking about them—that there's air for me to breathe and solid earth for me to step on—though if I fall through a rotten board in our floor, I wouldn't lose faith in my philosophical underpinnings, I'd merely recognize that my confidence at that moment was mistaken.

II. P. A. Dirac's classic words regarding quantum theory resound with assurance and certainty: "The underlying physical laws necessary for the mathematical theory of a large part of physics *and the whole of chemistry* are completely known." (emphasis added)

Why then should I, a chemist, continue at my desk or lab bench? Simply to test or demonstrate Dirac's assertion? Is there any urgency to synthesizing a new compound or determining its melting point or infrared spectrum, considering there are millions of compounds already known, and quantum theory knows all about the new compound anyway? If chemists really believed Dirac, the profession of chemistry would by now be a depressed marshland.

The trouble with Dirac's statement is that it ignores the finiteness of human knowing. Once before in the history of science, we were fettered by such a dogma. Laplace, in 1812, put forward his image of an intelligence which, knowing the positions and velocities of all particles in the universe, could calculate the future and the past in all detail. But human beings can only know positions and velocities within a certain experimental error. No matter how great the improvement in instrumentation, experimental error can never be completely eliminated. Thus no human intelligence can ever attain to the Laplacean ideal. The idea of total determinism is predicated on a type of knowledge unattainable by humans. Thus, in order to assert it, the concept of knowledge must be changed from its usual meaning of human knowledge. The above analysis was made by Ernst Cassirer<sup>1</sup> without the need to invoke the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. That principle merely states in quantitative form the minimum uncertainties always encountered when we measure "conjugate" quantities such as position and velocity, or energy and time.

The Dirac statement implies that chemistry is totally derivative from the laws of quantum mechanics. However, only a very small number of chemical systems, each involving not more than four particles (i.e. the hydrogen atom, the hydrogen molecule, the helium atom, the hydrogen molecule ion) have been derived



by calculation from the basic laws of quantum mechanics to a precision sufficient to check that they agree with experimental results. For all other systems, simplifying assumptions must be made. It is at this point that the statement is usually advanced that accurate computations from first principles would yield the experimentally observed results precisely, that only the prohibitive time and effort involved prevents the carrying out of the calculations at this time.

The question we must then ask is how prohibitive the time and effort might be. Is it merely laziness—combined with lack of funds—that keeps us from deducing all chemistry from physics? Or is it built into the nature of things that we are not able to dispense with characteristically chemical methods for organizing chemical phenomena? Is there a new uncertainty principle to be enunciated?

I have been asking this question for some years of myself and others. Just as Heisenberg's uncertainty principle can be approached from many positions,<sup>2</sup> so this new uncertainty principle will no doubt be demonstrated in numerous ways. One approach is as follows. One can obtain a rough idea of the number of particles in our total universe, which one can think of as the result of dividing the mass of the universe by the mass of the proton. Eddington obtained for this "cosmological constant" the value  $10^{79}$ .<sup>3</sup> Suppose we want to know the electron distribution for a relatively simple 12-atom molecule such as benzene  $C_6H_6$ . Suppose further that we restrict our interest to the "valence electrons," thus ignoring the pairs of electrons very close to the nucleus of each carbon atom. Our "wave function" must then describe the behavior of 30 electrons (as well as twelve nuclei, which again for convenience we assume are fixed). Each electron must be given three coordinates, so that we are dealing with a  $3 \times 30$  or 90-coordinate space. Suppose we content ourselves with electron density values at 0.1 Å intervals (One Å =  $1 \times 10^{-8}$  cm.) for a distance of 3.0 Å in a given direction across the center of gravity of the nuclei. Then we have 30 intervals along one direction. If we had a two dimensional space, the number of points at 0.1 Å intervals would be  $30^2$ . For three dimensions it would be  $30^3$ . For a 90-coordinate (i.e. 90-dimensional) space the number of points for which values for the electron density must be given is  $30^{90}$ . Now this number exceeds by far the number of particles in the universe and therefore a solution to the benzene problem cannot be arrived at even to the approximations just outlined.<sup>4</sup> To tabulate the electron density values would thus require the utilization of the atoms of our own brain.

Whereas then the Laplacean spirit pointed up the fact that to obtain natural knowledge we must use the tools of nature, so the quantum mechanical claim points up the fact that beyond a certain complexity we shall need to utilize the atoms of our brain in the construction of something outside our brain, the tabulation of our answer to a problem. Not only the tools of observation but also those of our thinking and calculation are part of that nature whose parts we observe, and hence not only our observations but also our deductions from the observations are limited by the fact that we are incapable of considering nature from the "outside". Though these considerations may seem obvious, one may retort that the Laplacean claim also was known to be humanly unattainable, yet its correction within physics led to far-reaching consequences.

The enunciation of the new uncertainty principle, which we might call the "Benfey Uncertainty Principle" for want of a better succinct title, is based on the classic insights regarding experts:

- who know more and more about less and less (ending with knowing everything about nothing);
- who prefer depth over breadth since you can't have both;
- who have escaped the danger of spreading themselves too thin by spreading not at all and contracting instead.

The basis for this uncertainty principle is thus well enshrined in the common folklore. The new uncertainty principle, just as the Heisenberg uncertainty principle, merely supplies a quantitative measure of inevitable uncertainty. The Heisenberg principle ties the limit of our precision of measurements to the Planck constant  $h = 6.6 \times 10^{-27}$ —a very small number. The new principle ties the upper limit of the extent of our knowledge to the cosmological constant—a very large number—the number of particles in the universe  $10^{79}$ . Within that limitation, you can have your choice—either much knowledge of very little or a smattering of knowledge over a wide range. Alternately, you can have a judicious smorgasbord of both. The principle, as I have shown, points up how quickly we must resort to severe approximation, there is little in science of which we can be very sure.

111. The writings of Michael Polanyi, of Ernst Cassirer, of Jacob Bronowski and of others have been moving us to recognize the absurdity of claims made in the name of science—more often than not by non-scientists. Any certainties we claim had better not be based on the latest twist and turn and somersault of physical, chemical or psychological theory.

We grow in certainty by the enlarging of our awareness. As Polanyi points out, a puzzle once solved can no longer puzzle us. As we live, we acquire a load, an accumulation of experience, of life lived, tasted, savored and survived. But we are not bottles, containers, being filled. We have experienced joy and suffering, hope and dream and accomplishment and frustration. These have molded us and made us what we are. We can as Eddington suggests sit with a friend we love, and each can prove to the other by impeccable logic that the other does not exist, and then the two of us will laugh with total certainty at the absurdity of the conclusion.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ernst Cassirer, *Determinism and Indeterminism in Modern Physics*, Yale University Press, New Haven, Conn., 1956, p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See for instance N. Bohr's account of his discussions with Einstein: *Albert Einstein Philosopher-Scientist*, P. A. Schilpp, Editor, Tudor Publishing Co., N. Y., 1949, p. 199, and Ian Barbour's *Issues in Science and Religion*, Harper and Row, N. Y., 1971, chapter 10.

<sup>3</sup> A. Eddington, *The Philosophy of Physical Science*, Cambridge University Press, 1939, p. 59, 170 ff.

<sup>4</sup> I am indebted to Professors D. R. Hartree and E. B. Wilson, Jr. for discussions regarding this problem.

## OBJECTIVE AND SUBJECTIVE CERTAINTY

by

Elwood G. Parker

(Mathematics Department)

The mathematician is certain that an indecomposable metric continuum has uncountably many components; the physicist is sure that a falling body will travel 1608 feet in 10 seconds. The psychoanalyst is just as certain that archetypes exist in the unconscious; the theologian may be just as sure of the existence of a supreme being. The mathematician and physicists have *proven* their results by logical reasoning and experimental testing, while the psychoanalyst and theologian have *experienced* their conclusions, either directly or vicariously. Each is equally sure of the knowledge obtained, but for different reasons. The former two learners are certain because their comprehension is exterior to themselves; it will be duplicated by anyone who answers the same questions they have solved. The latter two, on the other hand, are certain because they have felt, interior to themselves, an awareness of their truths which is as sure as their own existence. The first is objective knowledge; the second is subjective.

Objectivity and subjectivity may be distinguished by the possibility of the transference of knowledge obtained by their use. That which is known objectively is free of the bias of the knower. Therefore, conclusions reached in this manner cannot only be reverified by others but can also be directly communicated with equivalent understanding. However, subjective cognition is unique to the perceiver. It is part of him as feeling or experience and hence can be only indirectly conveyed to another person who may be able to empathize with, but never exactly experience, the knowing, being a different receptor with different biases. The methods of communication illustrate this objective-subjective distinction. Objectivity is a rational exercise with explanations demonstrated precisely and carefully, the words and symbols having single meanings not allowing for individual interpretation. By comparison, subjective expression is often allegorical, subject to diverse translation of its connotative language. In sum, the extent to which knowledge is objective or subjective may be measured by the dependence on the shaper of the knowledge—the less dependence, the more objective, the more dependence, the more subjective.

It also seems that certainty is correlated with objectivity and subjectivity—the more objectively OR the more subjectively knowledge is obtained, the more certain it is. Mathematical theorems and scientific laws are viewed as *fact* when understood; an individual is sure of what he sees, feels, hears, . . . *senses*. There is less certainty about the “middle ground.” For example, “anything can be proved by statistics” refers to the application of an objective tool with the immense possibility of subjectiveness in the choosing of data to support or refute a suggested conclusion. Determinations of the social scientist are often held in doubt because of the mixture of objective tools (such as statistics) applied to subjective materials (the individuals comprising the society being studied). Another example of the combination of the two may be in the artist using mechanistic (and hence objective) techniques in portraying a subjective perception of an object, thus leaving the viewer, if not the artist, unsure of what is represented.

It is bold and inaccurate (due to differing definitions) to arrange disciplines according to their objective and subjective content. The following, however, is such a classification (subjectively known to the author), moving from the more objective to the more subjective: mathematics, the physical sciences, the social sciences, the humanities, the arts, the religious experience. Defending an objectively indefensible distribution reveals little, but discussing the extremes may display more about the roles of objectivity and subjectivity in certainty.



Theoretical mathematics is the paragon of pure objectivity. The mathematician may only bias his work by his choice of assumptions, but in accepting axioms and making definitions, he is not producing knowledge, he only establishing a framework in which to pursue the knowledge. Furthermore, the axioms and definitions must be precise, they must "say what they mean and mean what they say," nothing more, nothing less. The axioms must also be consistent; that is, they must contain no internal contradictions. Within this pre-established system, knowledge is found in the form of the mathematical theorem. The proof of the theorem must be in terms of logical implication, and the logical structure of the proof must be apparent—so clear that the argument can be reconstructed by anyone who understands the axioms and definitions. The mathematician cannot bias the results. Regardless of how much he may want to prove a given statement, he cannot unless it is in fact true of the system in which he operates. Ideally, there is no possibility of distortion by feelings, emotions, or value judgements, nor even by the reading of measuring equipment, which is not used. The conclusion arrived at in the theorem has the possibility of universal understanding and discovery, being predetermined in the structure of the system. There is no dependence on the mathematician first obtaining the result for the theorem to be known because it exists as a truth by itself within the system. Objectivity reigns.

By contrast, purely subjective knowledge is epitomized by revelation, for example, in the religious experience (used in broad terms). The source of the revelation may be exterior to the individual receiving it making him the object, but the knowledge obtained from it is part of the person—felt by him, experienced by him, known only directly by him, and, as such, is subjective. The knowledge from revelation cannot be readily transferred to another because the experience itself cannot be duplicated for the other person. Furthermore, individuals are unique recipients of revelation, composed of diverse feelings and emotions, and dissimilar previous experiences, all of which determine the content of the knowledge obtained in this way. Such knowledge exists peculiar to the individual and is verifiable by him alone. The form of the revelation also differs. It may be a flash of intuitive insight, a vision or dream, the product of a rational meditation, or the recognition of miracle. Again, there is sole dependence on the person in which this knowledge originates. The same insight or vision may be perceived or accepted in different ways by different people. Objectivity is not a consideration; subjectivity is pure.

Pure subjectivity can also be exemplified by self-knowledge. If for no reason other than proximity, one has the opportunity to know oneself with a sureness unsurpassed in knowledge of any other thing. But the certainty of self-knowledge depends upon the establishment of a framework within which self-awareness is possible. Often the framework exists in a religious orientation, the individual knowing himself as a unique creation of higher power. Other forms, of course, exist. In chronic cases of self-confusion, the therapist aides his patient in uncovering identifiable bases upon which the patient may understand his inner drives and emotions. Regardless of its form, some framework, often realized in very vague terms and covertly displayed by the personality, seems to exist for each individual. Such a framework might be termed a "personal myth," but it is still real and certain to the individual, and the degree of certainty obtained from it is dependent upon how clearly it is defined for him.

For both objective and subjective knowledge, a framework exists, whether it be the well-defined axiomatic structure of the mathematician or the personal myth of the individual. In either case, the framework is within the choice of its producer, composed of truths held "self-evident" by him. The distinction between the objective and subjective framework is again its communicability, with an additional insistence on verifiable consistency for the purely objective basis. However, regardless of its form and content, the certainty obtained within the framework depends upon the firmness and completeness

of that foundation. A question which cannot be answered even though it can be stated in terms of the framework tends to shake the foundation and lessen the certainty which it gives. Of course, such a question can be arbitrarily answered and the answer made a part of the framework itself in an attempt to complete it. This is what the mathematician often does with a statement which is found to be undecidable. In a similar manner, each personal experience adds to the personal myth or alters the existing basis. The ideal is the production of a complete, all-encompassing structure in which each problem is solvable—one in which absolute certainty is possible.

Does a complete framework exist in which knowledge can be acquired, either by objective or subjective means? Many great knowers have thought yes. David Hilbert, the distinguished mathematician, was convinced that a complete axiomatic structure existed in which all questions about the real numbers could be answered. Isaac Newton saw the world as a machine in which the physical universe was totally explainable by discovery of the workings of the machine. Sigmund Freud understood behavior in terms of a sexual framework, and, for at least a time, seemed convinced that the sexual context was sufficient to explain everything. Many religious thinkers have similarly built complete bases through the formation of dogma. For each of these, whether objective or subjective in nature, not all answers to all questions were known within the assumed framework, but all solutions were supposed to be attainable through an adequate search.

What happens when objectivity or subjectivity is pushed to its limits in the search? Godel made such a push in mathematics, demonstrating that arithmetic could not be totally formalized, that, in fact, any "rich" mathematical system would always have unanswerable questions. Hilbert's belief was proven wrong, by objective means. Hence, every axiomatic framework contains uncertainty. Likewise, Einstein showed that an understanding of the physical world was subject to the relative position of the viewer, again creating indefiniteness by pursuing the boundaries of Newton's certainty. Similar occurrences appear in the subjective realm. Jung went beyond Freud, opening up immense possibilities through his collective unconscious, and also finding accompanying uncertainty in his subjective struggle. Paul Tillich's responses to theological dogma can be viewed comparably as a probe to the depths of religious experience with the same results of uncertainty.

No matter what the approach, objective or subjective, extension of the search for knowledge toward the ultimate yields the same result. There is only one thing that is certain and that is that there will always be uncertainty.

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# CERTAINTY IN ECONOMICS, CERTAINTY IN THE LAW, AND CERTAINTY IN QUAKERISM

by

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## Preview

Because I teach both economics and law, and since Guilford is a college founded by Quakers and I am myself a Quaker, I thought it would be appropriate to offer some thoughts on the concept of certainty as seen and as applied or practiced in economics, in the law, and in Quakerism. As a preview, let me note that certainty in economics refers to reliance upon specific data; law looks to common experience in determining certainty; while Quakerism assumes that an individual can find inner certainty.

## Economic certainty

Economic certainty relies upon statistical experience and empirical studies toward an analysis which can explain the past and forecast the future. Among the social sciences—which are considered to be “soft” as compared to the “hard” physical sciences—economics has earned the reputation of being the hardest, the most mathematically precise, and the most certain. While economists do not pretend to predict the behavior of any particular *person*, economists are very certain about the law of large numbers, or the stability of statistical frequencies, which makes prediction possible concerning *events*.

For example, it is uncertain as to which particular individual will die this year, or as to whose automobile will be involved in an accident, or as to what house will burn. Yet it is very certain indeed that someone will die, that there will be an accident, and that a house will burn. It is so certain, in fact, that—on the basis of “the law of large numbers”—we can accurately forecast from the stability of statistical frequencies just about exactly *how many* persons will die, *how many* accidents there will be, and *the amount* of loss from fires.

It is this uncertainty as to where the loss will fall, plus the certainty that there will be a loss, which makes insurance economically useful. Actuarial experts employed by insurance companies compute the premiums to be charged, and the results come close to being mathematically precise; yet no one is certain as to *who* shall die, or *who* shall be involved in an accident, or *who* will suffer loss. This is an economic illustration of the remarkable certainty which can arise out of an accumulation of individual uncertainty, indicating that the sum is greater than—or at least more predictable than—its individual parts.

Thus in economics it is not necessary to know how a particular individual will respond to an economic incentive; it is only necessary to know that a sufficient number of persons are so motivated in order to predict the result with what in jurisprudence is called “a moral certainty.” Economists are not much disturbed by so-called exceptions to the laws of economics. To find a peculiar person, such as a missionary, who is not economically motivated does not invalidate the general proposition discovered on the basis of experience that a sufficient number of human beings are economically motivated so that if a higher wage is offered for one occupation as compared with another occupation, there will be a tendency for the supply of workers in the lower-priced jobs to decline and for the supply of workers in the higher-priced jobs to increase. The same reasoning applies to the use of land, the use of investment, and the production of goods. To offer cases to the contrary does not indicate a flaw in the reasoning. Once



we have discovered the tendency, we can predict with certainty.

Daniel Fusfeld observes that only 200 years ago economic theory was a branch of moral philosophy. Today, however—with the exception of the Marxists who consider Western economics to be merely an ideological justification of an exploitive system (capitalism)—

... economics is the only social science with a generally accepted body of theory whose validity almost every practitioner would accept. It is true that there are many differences of opinion among economists ... but not about the fundamental principles of the science. (Daniel R. Fusfeld, *The Age of The Economist*, New York: Morrow, 1968, p. viii.)

The certainties or truths of economics include the following:

1) The economic principle known as the law of diminishing returns, also called the law of variable proportions. This economic law applies at all times under all circumstances everywhere in the world. This is a powerful claim, but concerning its validity economists are certain. This law is applicable to an analysis of a variety of situations, including problems of population, monopoly, and governmental activities.

2) The economic principle known as the law of comparative advantage. This economic law, about which economists are certain, tells us that it is more efficient (more productive) to specialize and exchange for materials, commodities, and services best produced elsewhere. It tells us that a common market and free trade promote a higher level of living. It tells us that peaceful trade is a path to economic progress.

3) The economic principle known as the law of diminishing marginal utility, nowadays refined to indifference curve analysis, gives us our understanding of consumer demand. This law is applicable to wealth and income and can be employed, so long as incentives are maintained, to justify the graduated or progressive income tax, including the negative income tax idea, and public programs of benefit to lower-income families.

There are other certainties, such as the principle that production at the intersection of marginal cost and marginal revenue will either maximize profits or minimize losses. There is the modern Keynesian macro analysis. All of this has given economics a paramount position in the social sciences as can be seen in the establishment of the Council of Economic Advisors in the government of the United States. There is no such council for psychology, sociology, or political science.

But economists must be wary about becoming arrogant. As far back as 40 years ago, in 1936, John Maynard Keynes warned against what has recently become manifest in the economics profession with its excessive reliance upon econometrics, computers, and mathematical models of the economy; and which too often passes for “economic research”:

Too large a proportion of recent “mathematical” economics are mere concoctions, as imprecise as the initial assumptions they rest on, which allow the author to lose sight of the complexities and interdependencies of the real world in a maze of pretentious and unhelpful symbols. (*The General Theory*, p. 298.)

Even so, as to the fundamental principles, there is certainty. Of course—as can be seen in the 1975 debate over the economic situation in the United States—economists do disagree about solutions. There is disagreement according to judgments concerning priorities, about applications of the theory to given circumstances, or about the importance of various public policies to be adopted, but there is no significant disagreement as to the theory itself.

#### **Legal certainty**

Legal certainty in courtroom situations is arrived at through the adversary system and the application

of rules of law for the governance of human behavior. The adversary system assures that all relevant claims will be examined and involves the use of a jury to determine truth. It is the jury which finds the facts on the basis of the evidence presented at the trial. According to its collective wisdom the jury must decide what witnesses to believe. Each party to the trial does its best to bring forth its position and the jury arrives at truth or certainty through the common experience of its members as a reasonably representative cross-section of the community. Of course, this consensus may be mistaken. Error is more likely in the jury system than with a verifiable experiment in the laboratory. Legal certainty is less certain than economic certainty, as economic certainty is concerned only with expectations of how mankind in general responds, or with predictions of what will happen or what is true for the mass of people, whereas in a trial we are dealing with a particular individual.

There are two types of jury trials. One is civil; the other is criminal. The idea of civil cases is to compensate the victim. The purpose of criminal law is to prevent certain behavior. Civil cases are those involving private persons. There is a victim who is complaining, such as for breach of contract, or in a negligence action. Criminal offenses are public violations. There need be no victim except the society. An example is a speeding offense where no one is a victim and no one is complaining except the arresting officer who is acting on behalf of the community or state. Although in most crimes there is, indeed, a victim, to talk about "crimes without victims" is really redundant since the criminal law looks to the actions of the offender. If I shoot a department store manikin, thinking it is alive, there is no victim, but I may be put on trial for attempted murder. It is the civil law which looks to the victim and tries to compensate for harm.

In civil cases the jury is asked merely to "weigh the evidence." The jury goes on probabilities as to the credibility of testimony, and what evidence seems to be stronger. Civil penalties are ordinarily monetary. But in criminal cases the penalty could be imprisonment, even death. Where fallibility is recognized, it becomes imperative to avoid non-correctible judgments such as the death penalty. Even without the death penalty, because criminal penalties are ordinarily the most severe, in criminal cases we have the most protections to the accused. Thus a much higher standard of certainty is required. There must be what is called "a moral certainty," not just a probability. In criminal trials the jury is asked to be certain "beyond a reasonable doubt." The jury must be convinced, *every* member of the jury, that the accused is guilty. In a civil case the jury is a judge of who won the debate; the jury decides on which side the scales have tipped; whichever side has the edge over the other is awarded the verdict. But in a criminal trial it is not enough to say the state offered a good case against the accused. In criminal cases the government has the burden of proof; the state's case must be so overwhelming that there is no reasonable doubt; the jury must be "morally certain."

### **Religious certainty**

Religious certainty involves a system of belief to show purpose in our existence and the ability to act and function effectively on the basis of faith in some fundamental moral values. Spiritual certainty seems even more remote than legal certainty. This leads us into a mutuality of tolerance in our pluralistic society. Yet each of us as individuals may feel a considerable certainty as to our religious belief. In fact, although in many respects it can be said that in religious belief there is the least certainty, I am persuaded that this is the area where certainty is the most vital. It is paradoxical that where we have the greatest certainty, as in economics, it is not as important as certainty in religious belief where many of my contemporaries seem to be least certain. Yet decision-making in economics, as in law, requires some ethical value system. We cannot operate without values.

For example, the biologist must have a value system. His bias is pro-health. He does not study disease because disease is interesting. He is not neutral, or objective, about disease. He's against it. His efforts are to combat it. The same applies to economics, or law. There must be a purpose. There must be a goal. This, it seems to me, requires a value system, which implies some religious belief. Without a religious basis a value system is relativistic, or situational ethics, which is uncertain. Certainty must be the foundation for religion. Catholics get this certainty from the Church, most Protestants rely on the Bible, whereas Quakers follow the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Let me ask this simple question: How old are you? Next question: How do you know? Probably because your mother told you, and you believe her. Most of what we believe we have either read or heard and we have not personally experienced. If you haven't been to Japan yourself then you must take my word for it there is indeed such a country. Of course, my word is supported by books, maps, TV news, and others who claim to have been to Japan, and so on, but that does not establish the existence of Japan with an absolute certainty. Just because everyone says so does not make it so. After all, at one time nearly everyone believed that the world was flat. Likewise, nearly everyone thought that a heavier weight would fall faster than a lighter weight until the two were dropped from that tower at Piza. In Christian religious faith the resurrection of Jesus is the greatest event of history confirmed by the willingness of his followers who, before that event were discouraged but now were willing to sacrifice their physical lives in the certainty of spiritual life. Yet most of the world today does not accept this event. If such were to be the truth, then every teaching of Jesus must indeed be the Divine Will. How can Christian believers convince others of this event which occurred 2000 years ago? Obviously, as a practical matter, most of us cannot personally experience every event in order for it to be confirmed with absolute certainty. By what process do we arrive at religious certainty?

Quakers believe that religious certainty can be achieved by direct contact with the Divine Will. This assumes that it is possible for each individual to discover the truth in opposition to what might be believed by the majority. Thus, a Quaker meeting proceeds on the basis of unanimity—much like the criminal jury, where one person can prevent what he perceives to be an incorrect verdict (true word). Quakers test their religious certainty against the experience of history as well as according to the perceptions of the individual. There is a spirit of mutual seeking: "Seek and Ye Shall Find." When an individual or a Friends Meeting has not only sought but found, such certainty is tempered by a belief in non-violence and respect for individual conscience. Human life becomes sacred in this search for truth. One of the consequences of this process in searching for certainty is a mutual respect. It seems to me that such a side-effect speaks well for Quakerism as a way toward discovery of religious certainty.

In their search, what have Quakers found? Quakers have found a method and a way of life. Quakerism is a continuous seeking. The consequences of the method, which is a recognition of Christ in every man, the inner light, that of God in every person, is to witness for truth, to offer testimonies, and to express concerns. William Penn (1682) said it well when he reported the result of this spiritual inquiry: "True godliness does not turn men out of the world, but enables them to live better in it, and excites their endeavors to mend it . . ." Thus Quakers are known for their efforts for penal reform, to abolish slavery, to work for peace, for racial equality, and similar social concerns arising out of a religious certainty that these efforts represent a fulfillment of "Thy Will Be Done, On Earth as It Is in Heaven." Many Quakers today are struggling to be consistent concerning abortion in view of the testimony against war and capital punishment. Thus a strong feature of Quakerism has been to bring religious values into everyday life.

**In sum**

Economics ignores the individual difference, relying upon the stability of statistical frequencies to discover truth or certainty as to the mass of mankind.

Law relies upon the clash of partisanship in the adversary system to discover truth as the jury in its collective experience recognizes certainty.

Quakers discover religious truth by seeking the Divine Will, the Christ Within, the inner light or spiritual certainty, that part of God which dwells in every man.



# THE KEISER-ZWEIGENHAFT GAFFE, EXPERIMENTAL NEUROSIS AND SELF-ACTUALIZATION: SOME THOUGHTS ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN UNCERTAINTY AND PSYCHOLOGICAL STABILITY

by  
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## I. By way of an introduction

When I was first asked to write this essay I understood the topic to be: "Uncertainty." I had no doubt that Mel Keiser had said "uncertainty" rather than "on certainty." He was equally convinced, in fact more so, that he had said "certainty," not "uncertainty." All of which should indicate why I, as a social psychologist, find the topic of "uncertainty" more intriguing than the topic of "certainty."

Psychologists interested in person perception—the way one person perceives the attitudes, values and behavior of other people—have demonstrated persuasively that we are not all perceiving the same world. The "Keiser-Zweigenhaft" gaffe (which I think he perceived as the "Zweigenhaft-Keiser" gaffe) is not a rare phenomenon. The classic research on rumor by Allport and Postman (1958) as well as more recent research on jury witnesses (e.g., Loftus, 1974) reveal that one man's certainty becomes another man's faulty perception.

My contention is that because we have not found an accurate and comprehensive way to predict the future, we are faced with the uncertainty of not knowing what might happen next. Uncertainty is thus inevitable, even rampant. Some people think they are certain about some things—that there is a God, that they have to die and pay income taxes, that the earth is round. Even these people, however, must deal with some degree of uncertainty about themselves, their beliefs, their behavior and, of course, the future.

I leave the existence of God to the theologians, the inevitability of income taxes to the economists and political scientists, the quaint notion that the earth is round to astronomers and astronauts, and the inevitability of death to doctors, science fiction fans, and Woody Allen. The topic I will focus upon in this paper is the relationship of uncertainty to one's psychological state. In doing so, I will first consider the psychological effect of environmental variations in uncertainty, then individual differences in orientation toward uncertainty.

## II. Environmental differences in uncertainty

Although I have asserted that uncertainty is rampant, this is not wholly accurate—some situations are more uncertain than others. A considerable amount of research has been performed to investigate the psychological impact of environments with varying degrees of uncertainty.

At one end of the spectrum have been those studies on environments with absolutely no variety, with stultifying certainty—total isolation. Typically these studies have included sensory deprivation (e.g., Heron, 1961; Zubek, 1969) and have elicited, at the least, extreme boredom and more often hallucinations and perceptual distortions. Suffice it to say that subjects were eager to leave these environments, and were only induced to stay by being paid.

There is further evidence that an unchanging environment, even though not to the point of sensory deprivation, induces boredom. Research on the exploratory behavior of various species—among them rats (Dember, 1956), monkeys (Harlow, 1953), college students (Berlyne, 1957) as well as children and adults (Mischel, 1971)—have led psychologist to assert that "curiosity" or "exploratory behavior" is a



basic need. Thus, for example, when a rat is given the chance to explore a previously unavailable section of a maze, the rat is eager to do so, even without primary reinforcement (e.g., food)—the mere chance to change his environment from known to unknown seems to be rewarding in itself. These studies indicate that there is some tendency within us to seek uncertainty, especially when such behavior helps avoid the monotony of a very predictable and restricted environment.

But what if a predictable environment becomes totally unpredictable? A chaotic environment, with all the uncertainty it engenders, often leads to or is accompanied by considerable stress; as such, it is likely to be even less desirable than the totally predictable environment. Bettelheim's (1958) analysis of life in German concentration camps, and Schein's (1956) research on Chinese "brainwashing" of prisoners of war during the Korean conflict indicate that part of the considerable psychological stress was due to the complete breakdown in predictable social norms, and the uncertainty left in their wake.

Similarly, an important decision or set of decisions that is impossible to make (which we might think of as a specific type of uncertainty) can lead to emotional breakdown. For example, "experimental neurosis" has been induced in various species. It is based on Pavlovian conditioning in which an animal is first taught to discriminate between a circle and an ellipse (the presentation of a circle is followed by food, the presentation of the ellipse is not). Subsequently the shape of the ellipse is changed, in stages, until it very nearly approaches the shape of a circle. When the discrimination becomes too difficult for the animal to make (as it ultimately must), the animal suffers from symptoms that are suggestive of breakdown. When the subjects were dogs, for example, formerly "tranquil dogs barked, squealed, tore at the apparatus, showed signs of fear of the room, and exhibited generalized inhibition leading to drowsiness and sleep" (Ruch and Zimbardo, 1971, p. 144).

Cruel though such experiments may be, they have been performed, with similar results, on rats (Cook, 1939), cats (Masserman, 1943) and sheep (Liddell, 1956). And most meaningfully for our purposes, such "experimental neurosis" has been compared with neurotic symptoms in people who have had breakdowns, and there are strong similarities (Kimble, 1961).

What then can be concluded about uncertainty based on this brief discussion of environmental variations in uncertainty? It is clear that both humans and non-humans prefer and will seek an environment with a moderate amount of non-stressful uncertainty. This would help explain the appeal of such phenomena as funny houses at amusement parks, surprise parties, pot luck dinners, or taking a different route home. But too much uncertainty, especially when it induces or is accompanied by stress, is not desirable and may even lead to neurotic breakdown.

### **III. Personality differences in orientation toward uncertainty**

Just as environments differ in their levels of uncertainty, so do individuals differ in their orientation toward uncertainty. Certain people seem to seek uncertainty constantly, whereas others put considerable energy into avoiding it.

There is much empirical research pertinent to the issue of such personality differences and one major theoretical contribution, that of Abraham Maslow. Let me mention just two lines of empirical research which support Maslow's theoretical stance.

First of all, there has been a substantial amount of research on the tolerance of, or intolerance of, ambiguity. One finding has been that highly prejudiced people tend to be intolerant of ambiguity. In their original research on the authoritarian personality, Adorno, Frenkel-Brunswick, Levinson and Sanford (1950) found that "authoritarians" (as measured by the "authoritarian," or F, scale) tended to reject ambivalence and instead tended to think in terms of rigid dichotomies. As they put it:

Ambivalence, e.g., toward the parents, is not admitted into consciousness by the “high” subjects but is rather solved by thinking in terms of dichotomies and by displacement onto out-groups. The ambivalence of the “lows” is more often expressed against the original objects (e.g., parents) or representatives, in reality, of the original objects, e.g., real authority. (Frenkel-Brunswik, et. al., p. 646).

Similarly, Frenkel-Brunswik (1949) found that prejudiced children, when shown a series of pictures that changed gradually from a dog to a cat, were slower than nonprejudiced children in perceiving the change. Rokeach (1948) came up with similar findings when he used a series of problems which could best be solved by moving away from an established mental “set.” He found that both children and college students who scored high on ethnic prejudice were significantly more rigid on these problems than were children and college students who scored low on prejudice. Rokeach (1960) later wrote *The Open and Closed Mind*, in which he asserted that people of all ages could be ranged along a scale of open- to closed-mindedness.

Another related area of research has to do with highly creative individuals, who, in contrast to authoritarians, tend to opt in favor of ambiguity. Not only are they “tolerant” of ambiguity, they seek it out. Frank Barron, whose research on creativity has included the study of thousands of highly creative individuals (among them artists, writers and architects) has found that:

One of the important stylistic variables is preference for complexity, asymmetry, and the challenge of disorder. . . . Such a person is not immobilized by anxiety in the face of great uncertainty, but is at once perturbed and challenged. (Barron, 1968, pp. 199, 241)

These seemingly disparate findings on authoritarians and highly creative individuals correspond well with Maslow’s theory of self-actualization. Maslow (1968), in reaction to Freud’s emphasis on “the sick half of psychology” (p. 5) attempts to depict “the healthy half.” His focus is on “self-actualizing” individuals, supremely healthy people psychologically “who may be said to be fulfilling themselves most of the time” (p. 97). Though these self-actualizers are rare, according to Maslow, they possess admirable human characteristics toward which we all should strive; indeed, in Maslow’s view healthy growth is “growth toward self-actualization.”

The relationship between self-actualization and uncertainty is of concern here: one of the distinguishing features of the self-actualizing person is his or her orientation toward uncertainty. As Maslow puts it:

SA [self-actualizing] people are relatively unfrightened by the unknown, the mysterious, the puzzling, and often are positively attracted by it. . . . They do not neglect the unknown, or deny it, or run away from it, or try to make believe it is really known. . . . They do not cling to the familiar, nor is their quest for the truth a catastrophic need for certainty, safety, definiteness, and order. . . .

Thus it comes about that doubt, tentativeness, uncertainty, with the consequent necessity for abeyance of decision, which is for most a torture, can be for some a pleasantly stimulating challenge, a high spot in life rather than a low. (pp. 138-139)

Thus Maslow asserts that not only are the healthiest people best able to cope with uncertainty, they thrive on it.

#### IV. Conclusion

Whereas we generally assume that people do all they can to avoid uncertainty, and maximize certainty, the research cited in this paper suggests that this is not always true: a minimal amount of uncertainty seems to be desirable. Moreover, some people seem to have a greater tolerance for uncertainty, and some—those that Maslow calls “self-actualizers”—even seek out uncertainty as a form of stimulation and chal-

lenge.

Yet even the evidence cited in this paper must be taken, if you will, with a grain of uncertainty. Just as Heisenberg's "uncertainty principle" has demonstrated to physicists that the act of measuring a process may change the process itself, a considerable literature on demand characteristics (e.g., Orne, 1962) and experimenter bias (e.g., Rosenthal, 1966) has warned psychologists that the nature of the experimental situation, and their own conscious or unconscious desires, may affect their results. Therefore, psychological research—and scientific research in general—must be seen as a dynamic process, an ongoing effort to approach truth (certainty) that is tantalizingly closer, but never fully attained.

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## THE PROBLEM OF CERTAINTY FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MODERN PHILOSOPHY

by

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The one thing that is certain is death. If we accept the fact of our finitude and confess our physical and mental vulnerability in both the tragic and comic sense of existence, we need not despair. We will then be open to the awesome mystery of Being and be constantly amazed at the inexhaustible possibilities it manifests.

Philosophers have been in quest of certainty for centuries. At the beginning of modern philosophy Descartes attempted to overcome his doubts by developing a rational method based on the model of mathematics. Such a mathematical logical method is severely limited in scope. To argue from axioms and premises only seems to end in certainty but Descartes argued from premises which remained uncriticized. Kant discovered the flaw in the ontological argument for God's existence which Descartes developed from the original argument of St. Anselm. The argument assumes at the start its own conclusion; i.e. that existence is a necessary attribute of perfection. Here is an example of the weakness of rationalism.

If we start from our ordinary sensory awareness we may believe we can arrive at the certainty of simple description of empirical reality, but Hume states that sensory awareness does not interpret itself. I do not see with my eyes that  $x$  is the cause of  $y$ , but only that  $y$  follows  $x$  in a time sequence, and so my concept of cause and effect is not drawn from sensory awareness. Hume believed we must be sceptical about the ultimate truth of anything based on sensory awareness. Such interpretations of reality that we have can never be certain and at best are conventionally useful.

Kant believed that man and his rationality are finite. We are limited by the mind itself. The world picture we have is produced according to the structures of the mind itself. The mind is like a pair of tinted glasses which distort reality and we can never take them off. Everyone has the same mind but the point is to understand how it works. We may never understand reality as it ultimately exists. The only certainty we can hope to achieve is a certainty about the mind itself. What Kant did not realize was that the universal mind he thought he was describing was the European mind of the eighteenth century at its best, such as the mind of Isaac Newton. It did not occur to him that the historically conditioned mind produced a world view as a result of its place in space and time. Heidegger points out that Kant's first edition of his critique gave more play to the imagination but the formal edition made the imagination an automatic image maker according to rigid laws of human understanding.

With that revision of Kant we end up with the certainty of historically conditioned relativism such as we find in the philosophy of Wilhelm Dilthey, but in the twentieth century we find more personal individualistic world views, or class conditioned world views.

Jean Paul Sartre concluded that we need not be conditioned by our place in time and space to make choices or commitments. We do not have convincing evidence to prove with certainty that we are so conditioned, but we can choose to let ourselves be so conditioned. Thus if I am born in a small provincial village, I can let that determine my world view the rest of my life or else I can use it as a stepping stone to get to Paris and choose a different world. It is a matter of arbitrary choice which way I will see it and nothing in my past *necessarily* determines what I will choose. That makes our choices absurdly arbitrary.

Sartre is as sceptical as Hume was that reality will reveal to us a certain truth upon which we can base our decisions. But whereas Hume relied upon habit, tradition, and faith to determine his judgements, Sartre sees that such scepticism offers absolute freedom of choice.

But we can put our decisions, judgements, or commitments to a pragmatic test. We may, as William James advised, commit ourselves to a particular view so long as it is beneficial for us to do so although if we are introduced to a more beneficial or fruitful theory, we may opt for that. Thus we can have no certainty that any one theory is absolutely right, however useful it may be for a time. Science has proceeded along these lines and the scientific certainties of yesterday become today's doubts and falsehoods. Yesterday's falsehoods become today's beliefs.

The quest for certainty has ended in uncertainty, but another way of putting this would be to say that the only certainty we have is that we are finite human beings. Life is full of riddles, paradoxes and mysteries. The only way to resolve them is through faith. I do not mean to suggest that the faith to which I refer should be understood in a religious sense even if I do not deny the possibility of religious faith. However, an argument from the history of theology may be helpful in illustrating what I mean by faith. Either understanding leads to faith as St. Thomas Aquinas argued, or as St. Augustine argued, faith leads to understanding. They were discussing religious faith, but I wish to refer to understanding and faith primarily in a secular sense.

That faith leads to understanding might be our only access to knowledge. The quest for certainty which I have described resulted from the premise that understanding leads to the true faith, or to the truth we can place our faith in, because we can be certain about it. But we have seen the impossibility of that quest. Thus, we must conclude we cannot put our faith in anything and we end in scepticism. If we start with faith and proceed to greater understanding, we are using the word faith in a different sense. We are using it in connection with trust rather than basing it upon certainty.

Advances in human understanding have come about because people trusted in their hunches. They had faith in their convictions. Often they turned out to be right, but the sceptic might say they were lucky guesses. But were they right simply by virtue of the laws of chance? Michael Polanyi has pointed out that a director of laboratory research is presented with many more proposals than he can possibly accept. He must choose those which seem the most promising. He cannot possibly be certain of the results. Not all projects will yield positive or useful results, and yet his reputation rests on his ability to choose enough projects that will ultimately succeed if his research center is to be judged competent. If he relied simply upon the laws of chance, he would soon lose his job. If, however, he is competent and the ratio of success to failure is good, then if he is that lucky, he can break the bank at Monte Carlo. Polanyi points out, however, that capricious arbitrary luck is not the basis of his success, but rather his talent for tacitly grasping the fruitful possibilities of the proposals presented to him. He could not absolutely specify the reasons he chose this proposal over that one, but tacitly he must have grasped through his skillful and tacit imagination that a certain proposal would be fruitful. It is at the very least an educated guess. He tacitly senses clues that give his educated mind the ability to guess right more often than not. He cannot be specifiably certain before he chooses, but he is not absurdly lucky.

Often, we cannot love and trust another person because we demand certain proofs before we place our faith in them. This is why we or they are so unfaithful. That is often why life is often so untrustworthy. A man of faith is not always right but if he often errs, he is also more than likely to find his faith is justified even if he sometimes has his doubts.

Modern philosophy began when Descartes said he would believe nothing unless he had a clear and

distinct reason for believing it. In other words, he would not believe anything unless he was certain. The philosophy which ensued has foundered upon uncertainty and ends in scepticism. Beyond this scepticism lies a philosophic faith which leads to understanding.

All human beings have long been in a quest to understand reality for what it is. Philosophers who have the faith that some sense can be made of it are complemented by the religious thinker who believes that it all makes sense ultimately and yet all thinkers must confess the finite limits of human reason to comprehend the mystery of it all.

## THE QUEST FOR CERTAINTY

by

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What stirs the imagination of the Western mind more than the quest for the holy grail? Everything came from the power of the grail. Parsival and others seeking it see it, brush close to it, but never possess this ultimate power. How much more illusive is the quest for certainty! Perhaps a bit more shabby a quest than the grail quest, but still as illusive.

I would like to describe first what the word "certainty" does in the English language, and then try to show how we misappropriate this use when we expand it to current popular forms. Finally I would like to show by means of an Indian concept how it is possible to avoid such "grail quests."

In normal usage we equate certainty with surety, with having no doubt. This, of course, is cast in terms of what I would call psychological certainty. One could have such a feeling even when confronted with facts of a contrary sort. We even joke about the fellow who says, "Don't confuse me with the facts; my mind is made up." Although this is the pathological form of such subjective surety, it does represent one end of a scale upon which all subjective certainty seems to rest. So often in common parlance we establish a high degree of probability with "certainty." This is at least inaccurate usage and may actually more be an indicator of our "bull headedness" as in the above expression.

Another use of "certainty" has come down in more technical language, and would be called "mathematical" or "theoretical" surety. Hence in logic the conclusion of a valid syllogism is said to follow "necessarily." In other words mathematical certainty is associated either with deductive or logical truths. The basis of surety here is not merely a psychological state, but rather a systematic or rational state of being necessary.

Western philosophy has quested for that "grail" under the banner of "necessary truths." The culmination of British empiricism seems to show that such certain truths are to be found only in analytic statements, the mathematical sort of self-referring statement mentioned above as rational certainty. Further it is our unhappy plight to be limited in the interpretation of our sensory experience to association by habit. The grail at this point is seen to be after all a mirage of the theoretical nature of man. Of course, not all philosophers agreed with Hume and British empiricism; certainly Kant's whole critical philosophy is dedicated to show that certainty is structural and supplied subjectively from the form of experience. Certainty is rescued but is found to be hollow. The grail here is shown to be after all an inner quest which was extrajected and worked out like a waking dream by medieval man. In modern times this Kantian formal certainty has been taken up by psychologists such as Carl Jung, who find a bio-psychic structure in man which is in some way built in, and through subliminal promptings supplies very much the same sort of prestructuring to experience as Kant explores in the 18th century. At least man is closer to certainty here than with the limitation by afferent conditioning of the Freudian or more extreme behaviorist, where, indeed, one is limited to such habits of association.

Western thought, then, seems to have developed two different attitudes towards certainty. One use, popular in origin, equates certainty with psychological surety. The second use is more technical, developed in science and philosophy. Here, certainty is largely mathematical and formal with little if any possibility of "factual certainty" which was the substance of the grail quest. This is the point, then, of the quest for certainty; it is a misappropriated concept from the theoretical side of man's experience.



I would even go further and say that “certainty” has no application to the psychological states with which man in popular use associates the term. Thus it is pernicious to be damned to a certain fate in hell by some pious churchman who in order to be certain that he is certain about your fate has you drawn and quartered to prevent your possible resurrection. Now all this is past and such certain fate has retreated into a small part of the fundamentalist churches; such is the plight of psychological certainties to pass with the changing cultural milieu.

To talk about the quest for certainty, then, is a Quixotic tilting with experience, which in Western philosophy has taken up all too much time and ink. Rather it would seem to be more profitable to find some sort of structuring of experience which would aid man in coping with a world which may not at all be congenial to certainty. Perhaps, after all, the old saying, “Death and taxes are the only things which are certain”, is itself not all certain. There are some living today who can remember back to when there wasn’t the present burden of taxes; and death, after all, is more an unknown than certain in its popular conception as the termination of all personality.

The Jainas in India early recognized the almost infinite variety in nature. Rather than try to carve this variety down to uniformity in speech, the Jainas used the doctrine of “syādvāda” or “perhaps” speaking. Everything we say has a standpoint from which it is true and another from which it is false. In other words to the Jainas there is no absolute position negatively or positively from which we could make certain judgements. This principle is carried further in Jaina thought to talk of the seven ways to speak about a thing (saptabhaṅgī). The first two are the only ones at all important to us. The first way of speaking about a thing is from the point of view of its own place, time and being. From this point of view (syād nasti—perhaps not), from the view of another being, the first is not what it was to itself. Although there are five other points of view, these two illustrate the “perhaps” thinking which initially at least protects the Jainas from the misappropriated certainty of either the bigot or the questor of the grail. This syādvāda doctrine actually comes close to the idea of “prehension” so important to A. N. Whitehead in his philosophy. Everything has a perspective and so the “field” and the “figure” both must be given. This perspective philosophy leading to a “perhaps” and a “perhaps not” about all elements of our experience was perhaps what Chuang Tzu meant in his verse:<sup>1</sup>

Chuang Tzu and Hui Tzu  
Were crossing Hao river  
By the dam.

Chuang said:  
“See how free  
The fishes leap and dart:  
That is their happiness.”

Hui replied:  
“Since you are not a fish  
How do you know  
What makes fishes happy?”

Hui argued:  
“If I, not being you,  
Cannot know what you know  
It follows that you  
Not being a fish  
Cannot know what they know.”

Chuang said:  
“Wait a minute!  
Let us get back  
To the original question.  
What you asked me was  
‘How do you know  
What makes fishes happy?’”  
From the terms of your question  
You evidently know I know  
What makes fishes happy. . . .

Such a “perhaps” approach does not lead to certainty, actually one is protected from it. The results are more of an attunement with the complexity of nature. This does leave man, however, with the certainty of uncertainty.

<sup>1</sup> Merton, Thomas, *The Way of Chuang Tzu*, Grove Press, N. Y., 1969, p. 97.

## IN CERTAIN WAYS

by

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In certain ways for our modern culture the subject of certainty is thought of as the prerogative of the scientific community. Something is only certain if it can be proved. In order to prove something we employ the so-called "scientific method." Thus we gather data, interpret it, generalize a hypothesis from the interpreted data, and then make predictions. If the predictions are borne out by future occurrences, we say the hypothesis is true. If scientists were to call this truth "certain," they would want it recognized that they meant by that nothing absolute. The truth arrived at is dependent upon the present theoretical framework of science. Insofar as one framework gives way to another, such as Newton giving way to Einstein, the truth held within a particular framework can be called certain but not absolutely certain. The Darwinian is certain of evolution, the Einsteinian is certain of physical relativity, the quantum physicist is certain of the statistical behavior of sub-atomic particles. But this is a relative certainty, yet certainty nonetheless.

Now this essentially "cookbook" image presented above of scientific discovery is, I believe, false—a denial of the fundamentally creative and personal characteristic of scientific thinking, and thus an obscuring of a different kind of certainty upon which scientific certainty is based. Recognizing that certainty is usually thought of in relation to scientific knowing and thus to proof, what I want to show is that there are other kinds of certainty which are unprovable that underlie scientific certainty and are present in much of our ordinary living. In relation to these sorts of certainty I want to go on to suggest something about the nature of certainty in religion.

By reflecting for a moment on this "cookbook" image of scientific discovery, we can discern the presence of unprovable certainty underlying the explicit certainty of the scientist. Contrary to this image, the scientist at work does not simply gather ingredients together, mix them up, put them in a particular mold, and predict the outcome, which is either confirmed or not as the soufflé issues from the oven. Rather there is a passion that motivates the scientist in general in leading him into scientific work, and a particular passion that takes up one question rather than another as worth considering, worth spending time and money on. Sensing the fruitfulness of a particular question, the scientist moves with it toward a solution on the basis of tacit clues. Until the solution is reached, the scientist is sustained by what Michael Polanyi calls a "heuristic passion,"<sup>1</sup> groping from problem to solution in a particular direction because of a hunch, an as yet unspecifiable intimation, of where the solution is to be found and what it is to be. Working on the basis of such tacit clues toward an as yet unknown conclusion, certain facts become significant for this pursuit and thus become data, while other facts remain irrelevant and thus are not considered data. There is then a selection made on the basis of a certain passion for and sense of fruitfulness of a particular problem and on the basis of the direction in which the scientist feels the solution lies.

When the solution is reached, the scientist does test his results. Predictability is a frequent criterion but not one that is universal. Darwin could not use predictability in demonstrating the truth of evolution nor could Tycho Brahe in verifying his explanation of a super-nova. Nor did Copernicus. In fact the Copernicean system remained unproved until Newton placed it within an over-all rational mathematical system. On the basis of this, it is true, predictions could be made. But for almost 150 years the Coperniceans upheld the truth of their view on some other basis than predictability. What this was was both a passion

for mathematical reasoning over against the Ptolemaic passion for sense experience, and an intimation of the as yet unglimped fruitfulness of the Copernicean system. Their upholding of the truth was sustained by nothing less than faith.<sup>2</sup> But even where predictability is relevant, the personal factor is present, evident in the ingeniousness with which the scientist devises a means to test his predictions and in his sense of how many predictions fulfilled is enough to confirm his hypothesis.

There is therefore no one “scientific method”; indeed there is no “method,” if by this is meant an explicit set of rules that, to be followed, makes a person a scientist. Scientific creativity is more like an art inasmuch as there is within it human passions, unspecifiable clues, and prerational gropings which can never be set out in a set of rules but are learned subconsciously in a master-apprentice relationship by the young scientist working within the scientific community. In the above foray into the nature of scientific thinking, we have made a beginning at recognizing other sorts of certainty than those requiring proof. Scientific certainty requires proof, but the process of discovering and proving rests on unprovable certainties.

Let us shift from the realm of science to the area of our ordinary living and speaking. Are there unprovable certainties here? Take an example of a pig standing in a field. I am standing only a few yards from it; I see it in the daylight; my view is unobstructed; I have my eyes open and am looking at the pig. Do I have any doubt that I see a pig? No. Then I am certain? Yes. But I am certain without any proof. If my friend accompanying me, a philosopher, should ask me if I am certain and then demand a proof, I am thrown into what Wittgenstein calls a “mental cramp.” Such a demand just does not make sense in this circumstance. There is not, as it were, the “linguistic space” to make such a demand. The words can be said, “Prove it!” But they are inappropriate; they do not fit. If, on the other hand, I make the claim about a field absent of any visible pig that a pig has just been here, then it becomes appropriate to ask me to prove it. I would go about doing this by citing various bits of evidence: hoofprints, pig bristles in the mud, the odor of the place. I thus gather evidence and show they support my conclusion, and can say with certainty that a pig was here. But confronted with the living pig before me, I am certain without needing to gather any evidence. Indeed any evidence I might gather would be insignificant as compared with the animal in its consummate refulgence—mud-caked, odoriferous, and snorting—before me.

Or take another example from our ordinary use of language. Sitting at lunch in the cafeteria, I say “Please pass me the salt.” It would be very odd if someone sitting with me were to say “Prove it!” My sentence is a request not an assertion, and proof is not relevant to a request. Again there is no linguistic space for such a demand. But my words do carry meaning and I have a certainty about this: I am certain these words will communicate my intention. My certainty is confirmed as I see the salt making its way down the table towards me. Sometimes, however, I am mistaken. The salt does not come my way; I have been misunderstood. Nevertheless, I use language ordinarily with this certainty that my words convey my meaning.

Here then are two examples of ordinary seeing and saying where we operate with certainty and yet certainty that is not provable. Our ordinary living depends upon these certainties, and so does science. Our sophisticated instruments are but extensions of our senses and in being used rely on our ordinary ability to see. The technical language of science used both in exploration and in communication of results is similarly dependent upon our ability to speak a language as such. Scientific certainty depends then upon two types of unprovable certainty: the tacit clues and passions held by the scientist and ordinary seeing and saying.

There is yet one more sort of certainty that should be mentioned which is ingredient in ordinary see-



ing and saying, and which therefore also underlies the scientific search for truth. When I see a pig in a field, I rely upon a vague background as I focus upon the pig. I see the pig against the field stretching beyond it with trees and hills in the distance, and perhaps with a red blur that is a barn on the edge of my visual periphery. I never see a figure, whether pig, daffodill, or person, without seeing it in a context, against a background. And I rely on this background in order to focus on the figure; I, as it were, draw the figure out from its background in focusing on it. This figure-background model is similarly at work in our use of language. As I talk with another about something, the whole of language as we have learned it stands available for our use and more particularly those words especially befitting the subject under discussion. Like the vague perceptual background these words are available in a non-explicit manner; tacitly grasped, they are within our reach to make articulate. In our ordinary seeing and saying we are certain of these varying backgrounds—not *what* they are, since they are vaguely or tacitly known, but *that* they are.<sup>3</sup> This is an unprovable certainty of relying upon them in the acts of seeing and saying. Inasmuch as scientific knowing is dependent upon ordinary seeing and saying, its certainty similarly rests upon this ordinary certainty. In addition to this the scientist pursues his work against a background of scientific knowledge. A theory, for instance, becomes part of a scientist's background as he focuses upon a particular problem, or a collection of data becomes background as the scientist gropes for a theoretical framework that will explain it.

What we have before us is three types of certainty, only one of which requires proof. We might call the provable certainty of scientific knowing a second order type of certainty, for it rests, as we have seen, upon a first order type certainty in ordinary perception and language. These two types of conscious certainty, one theoretical and the other ordinary, both rest upon the tacit certainties of human passions and backgrounds. These latter are in fact two aspects of one whole, what Polanyi calls the "tacit dimension."<sup>4</sup> The passions that grasp a vocation, a particular problem, or a way of moving from problem to solution, and the passions that underlie our ordinary acts of seeing and saying—such as the desire to see clearly what is there or to communicate clearly what is meant—create and sustain various backgrounds. The tacit clues we spoke of the scientist relying upon in the process of discovery are ingredients in a background sustained by the scientist's heuristic passion. We have been exploring then three types of certainty: theoretical, ordinary, and tacit. Only the second order certainty of the scientist is provable; the latter two are unprovable but nevertheless certain, for we rely upon them as we live our lives. Now what of religion? Is there certainty in religion, and if so, how does it relate to these three types of certainty?

What I want to argue is that there is certainty in religion but not the second order certainty of theoretical thinking but the unprovable tacit certainty having to do with human passions and backgrounds. Behind the ordinary backgrounds of our perceiving and speaking there is an ultimate background, a context of irreducible mystery within which we as selves live, move, and have our being. We encounter this mystery in the origins and end of personal existence. It is a mystery that I am I, and that being I, I should at some point no longer be. There is a mystery in my being sustained in existence, for it takes power to be, and that power is not of my own devising—nor comprehending. There is a mystery in my holding together as a self as such and in the face of seemingly insoluble personal problems, that I can come through in a miraculous way to some viable solution. There is similarly mystery in my relations to other selves and to the natural world itself. Love and the grace of open minds eager to learn both emerge out of mystery. And it is a mystery that there is something rather than nothing.

In relation to this ultimate background of mystery the ordinary passions underlying our ordinary living are oriented by the deeper lying passions that are maintained in the depths of our selves. In the depths

of our being we are passionately oriented towards this ultimate mystery—in terror, in the desperate defense of indifference, or in some kind of trust. It is as expression of one or another of these passionate orientations towards the ultimate background of mystery (and transformations in these orientations) that people have traditionally spoken of God, the gods, or the sacred, and of faith, grace, and redemption.

This passionate orientation toward mystery that underlies our existence as selves is a certainty we rely on to be human and to be this unique “I.” Like the ordinary seeing and saying, and the tacit passions and backgrounds ingredient in both ordinary experience and theoretical thought, the certainty in religion is unprovable. To speak of an unprovable certainty is not to deny the possibility of error and is thus not to affirm an absolute certainty. I can be mistaken about the pig I see in a field at dusk, which I discover when I walk nearer and find it merely a rock. I can be mistaken in something I have said, believing it would communicate clearly and finding that it did not. I can be passionately committed to a vocation or a specific problem for discovery either of which can turn out to be fruitless. I can create and sustain the wrong background as when through a moment of inattention I take someone to be using the word “bark” against a background of talk about trees rather than dogs, or as when trying to puzzle out what that large thing is lying on the beach I set the mast of the stranded boat among the trees as part of the background for a large boulder. Similarly in religion I can be mistaken by taking up a passionate orientation toward ultimate mystery which in fact is destructive to my existence as a self in relation to others, the world, and myself. And I can be mistaken in the words I use to communicate this passion and mystery if they in fact fail to express them fittingly. None of these types of unprovable certainty then exclude the possibility of error. Nor does the provable certainty of the scientist; he too is open to error when for instance he discovers inadequacies in his theory because there were more things to be taken account of than he had, either things newly discovered or things previously considered too insignificant to bother with.

In our exploration of certainty we have come upon four types in all: the provable certainty of second order science and the unprovable certainties of ordinary seeing and saying, of tacit passions and backgrounds, and of what we might call the “extraordinary” certainty in religion of a passionate orientation toward the ultimate background of mystery. In all of these types of certainty there is the possibility of error (though “error” has different meanings in relation to these different types); nevertheless, we rely upon these certainties as we live our lives and pursue scientific knowledge. Without them we neither could think scientifically nor exist as selves.

The demand within our modern culture for religious certainty to prove itself is misplaced—the result of taking the provable certainty of science as the paradigm for all certainty. Religious certainty is different from scientific certainty. But it is not alone, for it consorts with other types of unprovable certainty, also indispensable to existing and thinking, and is no more problematic than these. And thus we see that to be a self in the world is to live our lives among a multiplicity of certainties; it is to live in certain ways.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1958).

<sup>2</sup> See *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

<sup>3</sup> See M. Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, transl. Colin Smith (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962).

<sup>4</sup> See Michael Polanyi, *The Tacit Dimension*, Anchor Books (New York: Doubleday and Company, 1967).

## IAGO: A REFLECTION FOR CERTAIN ARTIST

by

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*What looks like stability is a relatively slow process of atrophied decay. The stable universe is slipping away from under us. Our aim is upward.*

Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason*.

*Nothing is certain in this world but death and taxes.*

My neighbor and yours.

You hear very little about Iago's "motiveless malignity," anymore, or at least I hear very little about it. When I was last aware of such things, the phrase might be dropped with a knowing smile. The idea was considered passé, not a sensible way to get at the substance of what is before one in the play. Of course, the style could be in once more; and I could be very much in step here. I am all for taking the characters of Shakespeare's tragedy and working with them as one finds them, as characters in a play. At a point or two, though, I may be found wondering over why Iago acts the way he does, and I may be forgiven if I say now that I don't wish to second guess his own stated reasons, that he has been passed by for promotion, that he thinks he has been cuckolded, that he hates the Moor, and so forth. What Iago actually does do and say in the play is my main concern, anyway, because I wish to look at him here as the artist in it—or, if you wish, as the playwright within the play. There is a good deal about the nature of his activity to suggest this approach to him. Iago is the plotter, the manipulator, in a sense, the magician or would-be magician of the play. He, more than any other character in it, attempts to conduct the experience going on inside its borders toward the realization of a vision that is private to himself. It would be helpful toward an appreciation of both the limitations and possibilities of his artistry to see how Iago stands in relationship to this vision, which is, after all, a vision of reality, of the way the world *really* works; and if I could do it, I would keep him, as the artist, separate from the vision he holds. But I do not believe that is possible, since he is involved with it, make or break, by way of a commitment that makes him champion his way of seeing against even the slightest suggestion of any other; that is, the character and the vision are almost one and anything perceived as a threat to the one of them is simultaneously perceived as a threat to the other; and the permeant scent of this embrace is its air of certainty.

In a way, at twenty-eight, Iago seems to possess and be possessed by the wisdom of the Old Testament Ecclesiastes, because for him, once oriented in his vision, there can be no new thing under the sun; and in a peculiar sense, for him, as, in a way it is with the Old Testament Ecclesiastes, the world is a stable place. Nevertheless Iago is the climber within this stability, and he is so because he believes that he has seen the naked reality and that climbing is no more than a desperate clinging to a physical evidence needed, not only to secure his sense of elitism among men, but also to secure what, for Iago, is about the same thing, his sense of identity. What makes his machinations particularly perverse is that he must perform them constantly in order to validate his position, that of the discerning aristocrat amid a chaos of illusions; this is to say that Iago is the engine perpetuating the principles he perceives; yet he professes to believe that these principles are general: true for all men, for all time.

But when I say that the world is a stable place for Iago in a way reminiscent of the Ecclesiastical vision, I do not mean it is exactly the same kind of place for him as for the Preacher, for whom it is a



context, a system, not subject to man at all, a place he never made and can never make-over but simply must accept his own futility inside of, his own insignificance, a design within which the wise men and the fool are equated. For although Ecclesiastes has earned his vision through personal experience, the vision itself is meant to be independent of him, of all: the utterance of the vision, is in the language of T. S. Eliot, perhaps, an impersonalization of it. There is no tone in Ecclesiastes of the Preacher struggling to impose his images of defunct cisterns and dust upon the reality of others. He knows the truth: the earth is a closed system, placid and indifferent to man's taking thought for himself. Nothing is more certain than that the sun also rises. But man, as Ecclesiastes himself bears witness to, can recognize this reality that he does not create, inside of which for a little time his desires wander. It may be a cold indifferent reassurance only incidentally received by man because his nature happens to be capable of perceiving as much; but it tells him where he stands in the world, just because it is independent. As such it congregates not only humanity, it congregates humanity with the birds, the fishes, the beasts, with all that one calls creation. It is a realization of context, therefore, which is even generative of a code of ethics, since it is established and not alone simply bracing knowledge but something to brace against. (One thinks here quite naturally of Ernest Hemingway, whose heroes are often like lonely artists—Santiago, for instance—witnessing for the possibilities of just such codes.) I believe it is possible to say that in the utterance of a vision, Iago's voice compares to the voice of Ecclesiastes a bit like the voice in "Prufrock" compares to that—or those—of "The Waste Land": his is inextricably tangled in the self, an entity for which it will lose the world and, one imagines, be content to lose it. But perhaps it is John Crowe Ransom, in his essay "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," who most succinctly states, for my purposes, the element imparted by the Ecclesiastical vision but missing from Iago's. "I believe," Ransom writes, "there is possible no deep sense of beauty, no heroism of conduct, and no sublimity of religion, which is not informed by the humble sense of man's precarious position in the universe."

Humility and a sense of the precarious. Anyone who has ever drawn one might remember here almost the very language of a simple will, that calls upon a man to recognize "the uncertainties of life and the certainty of death," and he might remember, too, just how transient the worldly accumulation is and how inadequate a measure it is of the fragility that he really wishes to pass on. But if Iago's endeavors on the behalf of himself and his vision partake in plenty of the precarious, from beginning to end they are without humility. And it may be that his severest limitations, considering him both as schemer and conceptualizing artist, are revealed by the absence of that sense in his vision of the way things are. For it is this lack of humility, or something very near its neighborhood, that allows him the terrific and, for himself as well as others, fatal sense of certainty out of which he constructs.

Certainty is an element he exudes in his great speech to Roderigo, for example:

Virtue! a fig! 'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus. Our bodies are our gardens, to the which our wills are gardeners; so that if we will plant nettles, or sow lettuce, set hyssop and weed up thyme, supply it with one gender of herbs, or distract it with many, either to have it sterile with idleness, or manured with industry, why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our wills. If the balance of our lives had not one scale of reason to poise another of sensuality, the blood and business of our natures would conduct us to most preposterous conclusions: but we have reason to cool our raging motions, our carnal stings, our unbitted lusts, whereof I take this that you call love to be a sect or scion.

This is not simply an affectation of tone, calculated to overwhelm a wavering gull; it is expressive of an attitude intrinsic to Iago's concerted impetus, an attitude like fenders, as when he is expressing one of his motives for revenge, that the Moon has cuckolded him, he sweeps possible "reality" aside: "I know



not if't be true:/ But, for mere suspicion of that kind,/ Will do as if for surety." There are other evidences of this characteristic in his method, and it seems to me that there may be nothing more central to an understanding of Iago's characterization in the play as seeing him as one who has an inner imperative to believe himself fully knowledgeable of what *must* come to pass: "I have't. It is engender'd. Hell and night/ Must bring this monstrous birth to light." You could say it is "engender'd" in himself, if you wish, by something "outside"—yet "the plot" and character are, and, of a necessity, so entwined, as I have said, that one is hard pressed to say who is engendering what upon whom. Iago may not know the monster to a fine delineation of feature, but he is convinced of its general contours. After all, so far as he is concerned, his vision has penetrated to those fundamentals; and whenever that was, the world became, not a place of wise men and fools indistinguishable in a larger context, but a place of fools and wise men divided along ascertainable lines: people who do not know "the truth" of the so-called human condition because they are incapable or because they prefer illusions as distractions from reality and must cherish them and, therefore, are never *really* in a position to act on their own behalf—and people who have discovered "the truth" with certainty and are, through it, functioning in a "real" way. One does not have to stand passively by and be victimized by a system he apprehends; one can manipulate it. In fact, when the cleverness of man grasps with unerring certainty the "way of the world," and his own place in that way, by the very cleverness of this grasp, he, man, can manipulate not only the way, but eventually the world itself.

One recalls Hannah Arendt's statement here, one she made in connection with the modern state of the human condition in her set of essays *Six Exercises in Political Thought*, to the effect that when all the world and even man himself become either man-made or potentially man-made, not only the ideas of human history and natural history, but also the idea of the cosmos in which *all* things find a relationship, disappear. But I am tempted to suggest that in such eventualities, the cosmos, or at any rate, the natural world, does not so much disappear as go into hiding—or, better, it becomes "invisible" by taking up a "new" abode, within man himself, where it continues to dwell in unmitigated, nearly unimaginable, suzerainty, implacable and indifferent as ever, but now so to man's complete ignorance. There must be a fine old Latin phrase of dry smack for what I submit here in English: *he would surrender everything to have the power he lacks*. This is a little like becoming what one admires. However, in Iago's case, as is the case with a number of cynics, I suppose, there likely was an additional convolution: before they become that, they are first dismayed, possibly even disgusted by it. And there is an effluvium of disgust like a luminescence filming much of Iago's discourse. The fact of the matter is, though, that Iago, like many of Shakespeare's villains, has a decidedly "modern" turn of mind: "'tis in ourselves that we are thus or thus." One thinks of Edmund and even Macbeth. But for Iago there is no recantation, nor any rising to the Ecclesiastical state of "To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow." There is only a decided degeneration of a grand enough, if dark, articulation, that laid claims far outreaching its power; as events progressively get out of hand, a steadier and steadier retreat before an admission of inadequacy against the incalculable, until the last defense is reached, an entombing in silence, more petulant than grand.

And if Iago is not the only character in Shakespeare to partake of the restrictive discrimination of this vision of fools and wise men, he is the only one I can think of at the moment who is yoked to it in a particular way: he seems stuck at a primary level with it, one beyond which he does not seem capable of developing. It is as if he has had a once and for all time revelation too soon. He is no longer in the "game" even for discovery; so that, again as an artist, of which he is one kind of manifestation, his discipleship to certainty curtails him terribly. He is never going to create out of the materials of the hum-

an spirit, in Faulknerian phraseology, something which did not exist before, he is going to reveal to the eye of the beholder a vision that to himself, Iago, is no longer even novel. You do not go to the place with him, as you might, say, by tracking behind Faulkner, "go with" the artist toward whatever revelations are involved with *Go Down, Moses*, so that you might, in the Jamesian sense, take these as "possibilities." What you do is watch him try to exert his will of certainty upon the larger fabric that is the experience of the play around him, until at last that larger experience proves to have strands beyond his ken. The handkerchief is important here; but before I made further reference to it and the irony of its "uncertain" origin and handling in relationship to Iago's use of it in his plot, I would like to pursue a little more the idea of Iago as a case of stunted development in artistry. In doing so, it is well to recall once more those colorations which are Ecclesiastical in his disillusionment and look for a moment at his relationship to the idea of time: for this has to do with Iago's sense of the foolish and the wise.

From the first broaching of his plottings, Iago is shown as conceiving of himself as in some kind of association with time. Time is, of course, the "element" in which things happen—rhythm, fruition, ageing, birth, death—life happens in what we call *time*. The Preacher has a strong sense of it, of its encapsulating, cyclic nature, and he has an old man's sense of the inevitable fate of the individual thing within it. Decay, decomposition, dissolution. But it must be a rudimentary comprehension that if there is anything time does not require in order to accomplish the inevitable, it is help. That will be, regardless. No stone upon stone, no evisceration and impacting in compounds—nothing will stay its ultimate processes. Thus in nothing is Iago so superfluous, so much the supernumerary and, therefore, so apish as in his dedication to the eventual ruination of "illusionary" design in all his disillusioned fervor. Yet he does not himself perceive this, for as he tells Roderigo: "Thou know'st we work by wit, and not by witchcraft;/ And wit depends on dilatory time." It seems obvious that Iago is time's fool. In its service, as he sees its inevitability, he is mid-wife ("There are many events in the womb of time which will be delivered.") but he is also, by virtue of the necessity of his vision and in order to preserve himself in the web of "reality" he is spinning, an abortionist. He cannot, as in one of Hamlet's last considerations, "let be," but has always to tamper, insuring time's destruction.

The perspective of himself as a fool, even time's fool, is not likely to open to Iago within the context of the play we have; for except that his character is involved with tragedy, he is very like Malvolio who, taking bird-bolts for cannon shot, cannot understand that in spite of his personal "virtue," there will be cakes and ale—aye, and ginger *will be* hot in the mouth. Malvolio's virtue is like Iago's attitude in the way of that passionate certainty that does not allow for bearings other than itself. One does not know why or how this surety of vision settled athwart Iago's sensibility. It happened somewhere, sometime outside the play's scope—even as the origin of the handkerchief, the piece of cloth he "uses" so adroitly and that eventually is central to his own undoing, happens. But the handkerchief's history is one that Shakespeare gets explicitly into the play, through Othello:

Tis true: there's magic in the web of it;  
A sibyl, that had number'd in the world  
The sun to course two hundred compasses,  
In her prophetic fury sew'd the work;  
The worms were hallow'd that did breed the silk;  
And it was dyed in mummy which the skilful  
Conserved of maidens' hearts.

The moment of Iago's "revelation of truth" is not explicit at all. It may be that having seen a concept of advancement "by old gradation, where each second/ Stood heir to the first," ignored, he was brought

up sharply. He would be, then, like one who has stood always inside a certain complacency, believing sleepily from moment to moment that a certain set of circumstances prevailed and constituted reality—then, in a flash, his complacency is shattered; the “old” dispensation is false; he sees through its forms with a withering sight: the world is the same place it always was; only now his eyes are opened to it.

Such a moment is, of course, a moment that can differ from man to man. When the scales have dropped from one’s eyes, one can keep on repeating the sensation one had at discovering himself originally—a stranger—tricked. And one can instantly know the whole story for all time. It is a moment with Ecclesiastical overtones, once more, requiring intelligence, a capacity for consciousness. But the extension of that moment to no larger understanding of context is not imaginative creation, it is not the discovery of possibilities; it is starkly a larger and larger expression of an appetite to prove what is at least as jeopardized as the “old” dispensation accepted complacently—a “new” certainty.

At length, one so sure of his readings is bound to be enclosed in the orthodoxy he translated. And, in fact, that is exactly what happens to Iago. As an artist, he is not even quite comparable to the spider, who, in reality, is independent of the web it spins. For Iago, the web spun *is* reality, and desperately so. He clings to it like a shred of self afloat on a predestined, isolated, flood of time. It is not even the means to an end; it is the end itself in perpetual need of a spinning which leads always back to himself, uninformed by any larger sense of his humanity. And he can never get free of the web, because he has left nothing “outside” to be free in. Outside himself, he has left literally no context. No institution, no tradition, no office, no relationship in and of itself remains viable, independent, possible. Immediately he should step “outside,” his own premises of being accompany him and make interdict any function but masquerade, with him a secret delight that finds itself intact on any terrain and can encounter only what it recognizes again and again and again, perhaps in varied representation but always and always granting him the same self-satisfaction of being incessantly “right.” “Thus do I ever make my fool my purse,” he says and the remark once again has an ironic ring to which he is deaf: fools are the currency of his status and he cannot be redeemed from his insatiable requirement of them. Inside the context of his own knavery, he must always be converting men into them—Roderigo, Cassio, Othello. And, save that his own person, Iago, that complex of whatever possibilities, is sealed off within his “knowing,” he has a startlingly free field of action to come up with so little that merits wonder, with the sole exception of *himself*, that is; and it is we, the audience, who see that. He, Iago, never does. All that feverish ingenuity of nighttime behind-the-scene activity! A frantic puppeteering to bring about the commonest vicissitudes of time! To make oneself personally responsible to accomplish what the indifferent wind and wave daily work upon enterprises of chance, to assume from a state that can know the origin of nothing the destination of everything, and to make the desperate business of one’s day and night the insuring of that finitely conceived destination—is, to recall what Othello tells the Venetians that Desdemona sighed, strange and passing strange. But so is the context that allows the maiden to love the Moor strange—so strange that her father cannot believe it, as Iago cannot comprehend it, as, for different but related reasons, Othello himself cannot—until it is too late.

But all these are characters in a play—possibilities all realized and let be by a great master who possessed, as John Keats said, *Negative Capability*, and possessed it “enormously,” a capacity “of being in uncertainties, Mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after facts and reason.” And that is why the character Iago is wonderful, and if it were possible to imagine him, momentarily, a literary creation, as really a Jack-out-of-the-box living human being who *could* have his way and have everything else be his way, which, out of all lack of humility, he could force, there would be no wonder left; for his certain and, in the end, unimaginative Answer would pervade all. As the playwright within the play, Iago is not likely to surrender power as does Prospero, not likely to give way in a gentle hope



of containment before the impetuosity of an irrepressible Bottom as does Peter Quince. No. His invention does come from his mind, "brain and all." His invention is himself and all must be made-over to the certainty of that annihilating pattern.

Iago says: "If consequence do but approve my dream,/ My boat sails freely, both with wind and stream." But everyone would all be bound in one ark of reference with Iago and the wind and stream would be that ark; therefore, everyone, everything is drowned before the voyage even begins. Beyond this, if one could consider Iago is as a man set out on a voyage of discovery through art, he must see the ensign as a sailor who will have to configure entire continental masses he knows not of, not even as blank places on the map, for such tells of ignorance and mystery, but as landmarks construed to protect a private vision. And this is lethal. And not reality, but the baldest sort of reliance on illusion. Cartography and blank places on maps are a fortuitous turn of mind here; for with them one thinks of Joseph Conrad's Marlow and that journey to the heart, a place of darkness. Iago is dark; he is complex; left drawn that way with blanks by Shakespeare. Not explained. Perhaps inexplicable. It is to himself that he was never a mystery. But it is well for me here by way of concluding these remarks, that I have thought of Conrad. In the way that I have so often seen Iago as an artist immersed in a vision of self, I may have run the risk of being misunderstood. One does not know where the materials of the artist formulate, where they take shape, if they are not some way transmuted by what we ordinarily call the self, the individual and endeavoring spirit; and Conrad in "The Condition of Art" makes clear, I believe, the distinction I need between the certain self of Iago and the searching self of the artist:

Confronted by the same enigmatical spectacle [the visible universe] the artist descends within himself; and in that lonely region of stress and strife, if he be deserving and fortunate, he finds the terms of his appeal. His appeal is made to our less obvious capacities: to that part of our nature which, because of the warlike conditions of existence, is necessarily kept out of sight within the more resisting and hard qualities—the vulnerable body within a steel armor. His appeal is less loud, more profound, less distinct, more stirring—and sooner forgotten. Yet its effect endures forever. The changing wisdom of successive generations discards ideas, questions facts, demolishes theories. But the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom: to that in us which is a gift and not an acquisition—and, therefore, more permanently endowing. He speaks to our capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation—to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts, to the solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which binds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living and the living to the unborn.

The individual and endeavoring artist in searching and finding is affirming something as gossamer as any web here, something perhaps perceived only in the uncertain light of the human heart. He has the humility to know this delicate and enduring tie has a place it comes from and, with luck, a place it is going to, binding "the dead to the living and the living to the unborn." Joy and beauty and pity and hope and sorrow are possibility enough for the certainty of individual beginnings and endings to face. "There's magic in the web of it," the Moor said of the looming of the handkerchief; but he might have said as much of the heart. Perhaps the heart, the human heart, is too fragile and finite a thing to wear upon one's sleeve for daws to peck at; yet even those of a somewhat shopworn nature appear capable of surprising alliances across time. One thinks of Emilia, whom Iago, in his own way, realized no more perfectly than Othello realized Desdemona; very nearly her last words in the play were also about the elusive handkerchief: "I found it,/ And I did give't my husband." The sentence cuts through all the

plotted weavings. One could say that that is certainty: Shakespeare is winding it up: purity wins after all. Except that the moment of Iago's undoing is simultaneously the moment of Othello's revelation and Desdemona is dead. We are left facing a naked moment that will not go away: the sacrifice and promise of maidenly hearts is not complicated, but it is long—and unexplicable—and long and finally immediate. Simple. And like a good many simple things, like certain gifts that come without the option of refusal or acceptance, merciless in the demands it places upon the maintenance of the human capacity.

5.



WORDS never directly translate IMAGES, but they sometimes illuminate them.

The nearest I come to any certainty about ultimate truth is that I perceive it continually changing. Therefore I concentrate on trying to understand its process of transformation and connections. My art is about this resonating metamorphosis—a dialogue of ideas and images, of appearing and resolving contradictions in colors and forms and faces, ambiguous spaces, fragments growing to wholes and dissolving into fragments.

My drawing is a series of marks, tones, shapes, textures in a certain order  
a womb  
an interior transformed into an exterior by being conceived and created.

Art as the record of a process:

#### Origins

Seeing a reproduction of a sculpture of a womb by Louise Bourgeois—wanting to make a drawing with female imagery—liking to make marks with a pen—having gold ink with which I originally gilded the lining and the egg, and which you will not see in the reproduction.

#### Production

A process of making marks, painting in, and cutting and pasting taking about an hour and a half, involving a dialogue with all the above, with my three-year old son and with other mental distractions and connections too multiple and complex to remember or describe. The drawing is, in fact, a collage—the original having been cut up and re-assembled.

#### Reproduction

Following the transformation from me to the object, the drawing, the original has now been reproduced photographically 300 times and become the last page of the first issue of the **Guilford Review**.

#### Extensions

Seeing this drawing, each of you will perceive (or ignore) it transforming itself further as it resonates in your own experience.

*Adele Groulx*  
(Art Department)







**GUILFORD**

**REVIEW**

**Fall, 1975**

**Number Two**





# **GUILFORD      REVIEW**

## **WOMAN    AND    MYTHOLOGY**



**GUILFORD COLLEGE    Greensboro, North Carolina 27410**

**Published Fall and Spring.      Fall, 1975    Number Two**



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During the school year 1975-76, Guilford College has sponsored a weekly lecture series on myth. Faculty from the humanities and the natural and social sciences explored, through the rich perspective offered by myth, questions of meaning in life and language, truth in knowledge and action, and the place of the self in the social and natural worlds.

As occurred five years ago on the occasion of the first Myth Colloquium, a student asked to lecture out of his own involvement with myth, and so we were pleased to have Wallace Galloway lecturing on his own experiences with Looking Glass Rock sacred to the American Indians in Western North Carolina. It is our pleasure and distinct honor to include within these explorations two guest lecturers who are outstanding in our day in the study of mythology, Elizabeth Sewell and Joseph Campbell. And it is as well a pleasure to present among the papers published this year in the **Guilford Review**, the reflections on Christianity and myth by a distinguished member of our country's business community, E. William Nash, Jr., Visiting Fellow under the Business Executive in Residence Program of the Institute of Life Insurance of New York.

The Fall and Spring issues of the **Guilford Review** draw upon lectures given in the Myth Colloquium. While the lectures have been quite diverse, one clear theme emerged among enough lecturers to organize a whole issue around this theme, and so the Fall issue is devoted to "Woman and Mythology." It is hoped this collection will contribute significantly to the already lively interest of Guilford in Woman's Studies. The Spring issue will publish the other manuscripts received from the Myth lectures.

Some have been puzzled over a college devoting an entire year's Faculty Colloquium to myth. More have been surprised at the sizeable turnout of both students and faculty from many different disciplines every Wednesday afternoon for an hour and a half. We can only conclude that myth is engaging and enriching the imaginations of many at Guilford committed to interdisciplinary dialogue and the spiritual quest.

Below is the full lecture schedule for the Myth Colloquium.

**MYTH COLLOQUIUM  
FOUNDERS GALLERY  
GUILFORD COLLEGE  
WEDNESDAYS 3:30 P.M.**

**Fall, 1975**

**Methodological Reflections: On the Nature and Function of Myth**

Rudy Behar	"If We Knew, We Wouldn't Have to be Doing This" . . . . .	September 3
Bill Beidler	"Myth, The Ancient Language" . . . . .	September 10
Mel Keiser	"Myth: The Play of Being" . . . . .	September 17
Jim Gutsell	"Myth and Belief" . . . . .	September 24

**Myth and the Humanities**

Gary McCown	"Myth in Rock Music" . . . . .	October 1
Ann Deagon	"The Poem as Cosmos" . . . . .	October 8
Dick Morton	"Beasts, Anonymity, and Men" . . . . .	October 22



Carter Delafield	“Artist as Priestess—and Maybe Prophet”	October 29
Beth Keiser	“In Praise (and Distrust) of Unicorns”	November 5
Bruce Wilson	“Marriage and the Puritan Myth or Sex and the Single Girl in the 18th Century”	November 12

## CONCLUSION

Elizabeth Sewell	“Images and Ancestors”	December 3
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## Spring, 1976

### Myth and Social Reality

John Stoneburner	“Images of Paradise in American Experience”	January 21
Jerry Godard	“My Myth”	January 28
Kathy Sebo	“The Dilemma of Living Without Myths”	February 4
Fred Parkhurst	“A Bicentennial Look at the Equality Myth”	February 11
Wallace Galloway	“Through the Looking Glass”	February 18
Carol Stoneburner	“On: Eating the Apple; Sippin’ the Cider; Spitting Out the Seeds; and Canning Applesauce—But Not On: Baking Apple Pie”	February 25

### Myth and Scientific Reality

Donald Millholland	“A Myth is a Myth is a Myth is a Myth”	March 3
Ted Benfey	“The Myth of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness through Chemistry”	March 17
Sheridan Simon	“Is the Thought of an Electron a Real Thought?”	March 24
Cyril Harvey	“Myth: Magic, Metaphor, and Meaning”	March 31

## CONCLUSION

Joseph Campbell		April 7
3:30	“The Psychological and Social Functions of Mythology”	Founders Hall
8:15	“Psyche and Symbol”	Founders Hall

THE POEM AS COSMOS  
or  
Poetry As an Unnatural Act  
by  
Ann Deagon  
(Classics)

Do I mean that poetry is order? (But my poems are distinctly disorderly.) Maybe I mean only that my poetry rises out of chaos. (Remember that chaos is not the opposite of cosmos, but the prerequisite for it, what draws it into existence.)

But yes, I do mean that I *make* my poems. *Poiesis* means making—or doing. It doesn't mean being. Being I can't help. I am. But doing and making I choose. I choose to write (the creative process), which results in the poem (the creature). This is the god-act, which I take to be the human-act. I call it "unnatural" because it is deliberate, because it is one of the acts (perhaps for me the principal act) by which I distinguish myself from the natural world of sunsets, rocks, trees, animals, birds—none of which, to my understanding, make poems. (For which we may be thankful.) It may be anti-ecological (which is worse right now than being antidisestablishmentarian) that my existence as a natural being has value and meaning for me primarily at that point of crossing where I recreate my being through consciousness and choice. And for me, that juncture of being and making is most intense in the writing of poetry.

I have an irrational dislike of rational discourse, and believe me—which you should!—it's been difficult to say this much in some kind of schematic language. I would rather read you poems and tell you dreams. I'll begin with the poem I usually begin readings with, since I am usually introduced as a Professor of Classics—which I am, though hardly exclusively. It's entitled, conventionally enough,

INVOKE THE MUSE

I string my kite for storms  
with picture wire  
wind it round my fist  
clench teeth and hold hard.  
That singing strike  
that melts your fillings  
that's inspiration.

I had a friend once  
walked by the beach  
and drew the lightning.  
It fused the zipper to his crotch.  
Fool coroner!  
If they'd unzipped him  
there was a poem inside.

You'll notice that poetic inspiration in this poem is compared to something in the physical world (lightning) and something in the biological world (sex). In fact, one of my critics has remarked that Ann Deagon can't tell the poem from the pudendum. I can. But I choose to point up the similarities. The emphasis in that poem is on the danger of invoking the muses, of inviting the daimonic. I'd like

to read another somewhat bizarre poem about the muses, dedicated to my friend Gary Corseri.

### THE BROWN MUSES

More faithful than dogs or women  
the cockroaches of my friend  
stick with him, his habitat  
theirs. At night in the Chevrolet  
bedded on manuscripts he dreams;  
their subliminal munching whispers  
something Jurassic. Along his arm  
like the eyelashes of sibyls  
their legs encode a wisdom to his blood.  
They are teaching him survival:

Do not change. Go underground.  
While men sleep practice  
our stealthy art. Infest their minds.  
Feed relentlessly. The exterminators  
eat out their hearts.

They will never get us all.

This poem seems to be suggesting that the impulse toward poetry is something genetic, perhaps a survival mechanism.

It is commonplace, in this day of Jungian orthodoxy, to point out the similarities between poem and dream and myth, and to state that poets experience the moment of inspiration as an altered state in which we receive the impulse for a poem as if from an external source, whether we interpret that source as the muses, the collective unconscious, or whatever. Since it's so commonplace to talk about it I won't talk about it, but try to say it to you as I experience it.

One day, as I always do, I came into my office, plugged in the kettle, put coffee and sugar and milk into my cup. When the kettle boiled I unplugged it and began pouring water into my cup. In the time it took me to fill the cup, I experienced in great detail something like six or seven months of a life not my own—though it did contain unaccountable flashbacks to my own childhood. I was considerably shaken by the experience, though the invasion did not seem to me hostile. Some months later I made that experience into a poem, which I will now read. The poem alternates between newspaper accounts, quotations from the Bhagavad-Gita, and monologues by various people involved in the series of actions: an F. B. I. man, a librarian, a Hindu boy, and an American attache.

### THE HIT MAN

Washington, Jan. 21—a  
house-by-house search  
today uncovered the room  
from which the Speaker's  
assassin fired the fatal  
shot. Authorities refused  
further comment.

In a clean place establishing

A steady seat for himself,  
That is neither too high nor too low,  
Covered with a cloth, a skin, and kusa-grass.  
*BHAGAVAD GITA VI. 11*

I tell you it was businesslike; bare,  
not a stick of furniture but one  
low table by the window, a blanket,  
no fingerprints. What's stranger, no garbage.  
I've seen one other, you know—that Nazi  
who killed the civil rights man. A mess  
of sandwich wrappers, beer cans. This guy  
was of a different breed. Professional,  
exact. Three days he waited, never even  
ate or drank as best we make it out.  
And when the limousine drove up, one shot.  
He even cleaned the gun and left it for us—  
no way to trace it or trace him. A man  
like that must make a killing every time  
he pulls the trigger. The pros come high.

New York, Jan. 24—a  
briefcase containing ap-  
proximately \$100,000 has  
been found in the 58th St.  
branch library. Police  
deny any connection with  
the recent assassination.

Free from wishes, mind and soul restrained,  
Abandoning all possessions,  
Action with the body alone  
Performing, he attains no guilt.  
IV.21

I simply can't believe that Mr. Legion  
would be involved in anything unsavory.  
He was always quiet and considerate,  
a scholarly man, almost professional—  
although I never knew what his profession was.  
He used to read financial news and study  
government documents and newspapers  
and things like timetables and picture files.  
I think he may have been some kind of free lance  
that wrote biographies of living men.  
And when he finished one he'd take a brief  
vacation and come back to start another.  
Lately he'd been reading up on India:

holy men and forms of meditation,  
scriptures like the *Vedas* and the *Gita*.  
I'm sure that when you find him he'll explain  
about the bills. I do hope nothing's happened.

New Delhi, April 13 –  
Government officials ad-  
mitted today that the  
knife-wielding psychopath  
who has stalked and killed  
eight wandering holy men  
in outlying districts of  
the province is still at  
large.

As leaving aside worn-out garments  
A man takes other, new ones,  
So leaving aside worn-out bodies  
To other, new ones goes the embodied soul.  
II. 22

When I see American get off  
airplane I follow him for bakshish. But  
his bag feel empty when I carry it.  
I wait for him before hotel and take him  
down to market. He buy knife and clothes  
like holy man. Next day he wear that clothes  
and stand on street beside all beggars. Soon  
he go to temple, move his arms like praying.  
Once I think I see four arms. I am  
afraid of him. I am afraid he be  
some old god come down new to dance like Shiva.  
His knife is very long. I follow him.  
He leave the street and journey to a village  
with holy man's disciples. When day come  
holy man is dead, his inside pieces  
curled around like carving on the temples  
holy blue and red. We pray to Shiva  
before we call the magistrate. I know  
such holiness is danger and my faith  
not enough to follow him no more.

New Delhi, Sep. 2 –  
Authorities have revealed  
that a suspect in last  
spring's brutal slaying  
of holy men has been taken



into custody. There are  
rumors, so far unsubstanti-  
ated, that the suspect is  
an American.

And when he withdraws,  
As a tortoise his limbs from all sides,  
His senses from the objects of sense,  
He is called a stable-minded holy man.

II. 58

It isn't quite that simple. Extradition  
would be—embarrassing. And may turn  
out to be quite unnecessary. The  
circumstances of his capture were  
bizarre to say the least. The constable  
was summoned by a shepherd who had seen  
a miracle: a holy man, he said,  
had sprung new-born out of his murdered corpse.  
The constable went running. Sure enough,  
he found the “holy man” in some outlandish  
posture of meditation, kneeling in  
what must have been some eight or ten weeks gone  
an elaborately eviscerated corpse.  
The corpse was probably Indian. The man  
is certainly white, though leathered black enough  
by this ungodly sun. I have talked to him,  
or at him. He is somewhere else. His nails  
have grown like spatulas, his eyes are dark  
as mine-shafts and as empty. He has had  
no food now for some months. He may have drunk  
rain water. It does not rain in cells.  
I mean that if you will exert some small  
measure of self-restraint the problem here  
will solve itself. . . . You'll be amused to learn  
the villagers are setting up a shrine  
to commemorate his brief carnal sojourn  
among them. If no next of kin  
turn up to claim the body, what do you say  
we let them have it? It would seem to be  
an appropriate end.

Who believes him a slayer,  
And who thinks him slain,  
Both these understand not:  
He slays not, is not slain.

II. 19

The actual writing of this poem took place in a single day of very exacting and conscious effort. The most noticeable thing about the final version is that the main character of the story, the character in which I experienced the whole chain of events that morning in my office, does *not* speak in the poem. The structure of the poem is of my conscious making, a structure by means of which to contemplate that series of events, through four people with very different world-views, and through two other modes of writing (the newspaper account and the Bhagavad-Gita) which are themselves attempts to comprehend the meaning of events.

Let me go on to another instance of inspiration in which I was again confronted by an archetypal figure. (I think it will have been clear that the Hit Man was in some sense a Shiva figure.) For a couple of weeks I had been spending all my free hours—I was teaching summer school—pulling up the various kinds of grass and weeds that had grown up, over a period of about seven years, through the old gravel in our driveway. At night or when I took a nap, or sometimes even without my closing my eyes, I began to see the pattern of crabgrass, the shoots radiating from a center. This made me aware that I had been attempting to replace a “natural” order, the pattern of the crabgrass, with my own “unnatural” order of gravel—and now the grass was getting back at me. I kept right on, of course, and a few days later, while actually weeding, I had a crabgrass vision: the pattern of the grass expanded into a room in which an old lady was sitting, surrounded by what appeared to be a network of string. I saw the old lady quite clearly the first time. Afterwards, the same figure would begin to form, but fade just before becoming actually visible. I finished the weeding, but I knew that I must write about that lady.

#### THE STRING LADY

The string lady is in her room.  
She has unraveled the city.  
Great hanks snarls ravelings  
of twine net her. She is a salty  
catch, an octopus untangling  
America. She rolls it up. Balls  
orbit her like moons. They snowball.

This is no yarn I spin: the lady  
is real. Her room is on 46th Street,  
the 9th floor. She has lived there  
for years. This is what she does.  
Why did she begin? Did she  
watch a beachcomber shoulder  
a great rope, its frayed end  
down his back like a mane  
raveled to ringlets? Or  
on Sunday morning opening  
the broom closet found the roomer  
with an extension cord close  
around his throat? She does not say.

It gets harder to find string.  
Soon the world will come unstrung.  
Then she will unravel the drapes

the bedspread her socks sweater  
underwear her white hair her skin  
coarse threads slubbed with moles  
then her stringy flesh veins tendons  
wound round. Last the ganglia  
the spinal cord—oh Ariadne's clue  
out of the labyrinth and all it takes  
is winding! She winds down  
the last spidery ball. The room  
is in order. The room waits.

After a thousand years or so, listen:  
Do the balls stir? Is something  
beating like a heart?

Once again I want to make the point that in making a poem out of the vision, I work at the peak of my *conscious* powers. The problem of the poem was to do justice to the complexity and range of the archetypal figure, to build into the language of the poem enough references to the various levels of meaning for the reader to take them all in, whether consciously or—as I would prefer—through some more subtle form of awareness. I needed to make the lady a real person, caught in a particular historical, economic, psychological situation; but at the same time a symbol of the workings of the universe, a planetary system and a spider in a web, and octopus in a net; and at deeper levels the ancient symbol of human fate, the spinner—and at the same time the poet, who out of the hanks of raw experience makes balls, poems. This is why I wrote “This is no yarn I spin: the lady/ is real.” Not because the lady was real, but because I wanted the reader to notice that in reality I, Ann Deagon, was “spinning a yarn,” that I was myself the spinner.

In actuality, I rarely have a vision. More often it's something verbal that comes out of nowhere. For instance, I was once in the bathtub when struck by a line of poetry—“I have xeroxed my navel.” I nearly drowned laughing, but I did go on to write the poem, and in the process of writing it discovered where it had come from. I had recently applied for a passport and been forced to write back to Alabama to obtain proof of my birth. Here is that poem.

#### CERTIFIED COPY

I have xeroxed my navel  
bare-bellied in the Guilford Library  
borne on the hymeneal cries  
of hysteric librarians, inserted a coin  
prone on the glass slab steeled myself against  
the green light's insolent stroke  
and viewed emerging  
instantaneously, parthenogenously from the slit  
this reproduction of my reproduction  
this evidence of my most human birth.

Archives forget, Bibles prevaricate  
aged witnesses from age grow witless  
only the skin remembers, swirling to clench  
the archetypal wound: the center holds.

Dreams are for me another important source of archetypal material for poetry. There are times when a dream is so powerful, so terrifying a confrontation with uncontrollable powers, whether of the other or the self, that for me making it into a poem becomes the only way of insulating myself against it. This was true of a nightmare I had last year about the kidnapping and death of one of my children. The title, "Gestaltling the Dream," is a phrase some psychologists use for the technique of examining each part of the dream as revealing something about the condition of the dreamer.

### GESTALTING THE DREAM

Yes, yes, you explained all that  
how every figure of whatever nightmare  
is me, all things acts beings places  
all myself, myself the delicate  
sinister whisper on the phone: my child  
unharm'd, she says, or soon will heal;  
myself the boy sent for help who never . . .  
myself the three workmen rough with beer  
fondling me toward the shack, crumpling  
the scrap of paper with the license number  
of the kidnappers' van; myself the squad-car  
passing one street over out of hearing  
unable (as I am unable) to prevent  
anything; myself the final woman  
preacher: Let's see what miracle the Lord  
hath wrought this day—lugging out of the trunk-  
altar the clothes bag with something in it,  
unzipping the child's body miraculously dead.

Yes, Doctor, I admit everything, everyone,  
every malice and forethought. But note, Doctor:  
I am the mother who did not kill the child  
who did not lock her in the trunk. I am  
in fact the child, wanted dead or alive,  
the missing savior-cop as well as the missing  
killer, the missing aunts uncles lovers  
the father most of all who never appears.  
(I am him so entirely he never appears  
he is my dreaming eye my dreams turn blue  
at their edges from his iris.) Calm yourself,  
Doctor, I am you with your extravagant  
expectations of healing what the dream  
knows dies. Doctor, I am the poet  
of every one of my dreams and of this poem.  
And you, Reader, looking away—  
when did you first suspect that I am you?

I believe that poem illustrates something of what I meant by choosing to make art out of dream. The speaker begins as the helpless victim of the dream but during the poem gradually assumes mastery over



herself over the dream, and through the dream over the doctor and finally the reader—without denying (rather by asserting) the validity of the dream as an image of the human condition.

Let me read one more dream poem, which I know came out of a profound personal experience, and which disturbed me until I had made it into a poem.

### CUSTOMS OF THE ESQUIMAUX WOMEN

They do not stalk the caribou  
tall-boned over hard white.  
Kneeling fur-trousered low to  
the bleak of ice they cut one  
pure hole, prise up its flat moon.  
In under sea the muscled seal  
like dark pigs root for air.  
One woman loosens furs, dips one  
bare breast into the breathing hole:  
its nipple spurts a thread of scent.  
Seal veer and rise, their snouts  
nudge, nuzzle, strike. The woman  
screams, they grapple, tug the black  
clenched beast on ice, hack off  
its head, the woman's cry still coming hoarse,  
rhythmic.

Nights in the igloo she crouches,  
softens stiff skin between her teeth.  
Beside her in a shallow stone  
seal blubber flickers the whole night.

This dream is very strongly visual—with three scenes in black and white, the men hunting caribou, the long scene of the women at the breathing hole, and the final scene of the woman in the igloo. The opening and closing scenes I worked out consciously; but the center scene, the seal-fishing scene, I dreamed in the first person, myself the woman who entraps the seal. In order to make a poem of this dream, I felt I had to control the material, to submerge my violent personal involvement. I did this by adding the two other scenes, particularly the last one, where the absolute calm is in contrast to the violence of the seal-hunt, where the roles have been reversed, where a certain balance has been established. In addition, I constructed a whole culture around the woman, so that her experience becomes not a personal conflict but part of a communal way of life. I use not only the third person, but the third person plural. It is they, not I, who experience such things. Finally, just as a clue for the reader, I spell the title in the 19th century way, E-S-Q-U-I-M-A-U-X, so that the account will be perceived as a tale told by travelers, not as an actuality. (Believe me, that wouldn't be a very practical way to trap seal.) When I have made the poem, I feel that I have made it more "true" to myself than the dream was—because the dream spoke only my daimonic nature, the poem creates the whole of me. I am *both* the woman luring the seal, as my dream tells me, *and* the poet who sits quietly in the igloo turning experience into the stuff of each day's life, and into poems.

I don't want to leave the impression that I depend entirely on dreams and visions for my poetry. Much of it is sheer invention, that is, an inviting of the waking mind to create as freely as the dreaming mind.

Let me read you one such day-dreamed poem, which I feel succeeds in creating a world with archetypal figures and some of the same associative connections as dream and myth. It's called "The Death of Phidias," and to follow it you need only to know that Phidias was a Greek sculptor whose statues embodied the 5th century ideal of man. The political leader Pericles was his friend, and enemies of Pericles had Phidias accused first of embezzlement, later of impiety. He is said by some sources to have died in prison.

### THE DEATH OF PHIDIAS

Between the trial for embezzlement and the trial for impiety  
Phidias sickened in prison and then went mad.  
When we brought his water he flung it on the floor  
and scraped up the hard-packed clay with his rotting nails  
to mold crazed figurines:  
a man with his head attached between his legs  
and on his shoulders a great erection;  
women with holes in their breasts and teats on their buttocks;  
babies with too many arms and not enough legs;  
a hunched hermaphrodite with a giant hand  
coming out of its rump like a rooster's tail.

When they put him on trial he crowed like a rooster himself  
and when they asked what he meant by that he said  
he was Zeus the Cock crowing so the sun would rise.  
They convicted him, but some of the jurymen wept  
and all of them shuddered. Back in prison  
while his friends were scraping up his fine  
he ate the crusts of his bread but molded the insides  
with his saliva into indefinable forms:  
intestines that flowered into cabbages,  
livers with claws, things without names or existence  
except in his hands and our half-tainted eyes.

He began to save his excrement in a corner  
saying that it was his earnings to pay his fine.  
That last day when we found him he had torn  
one wrist with his toenail, blending the oozing blood  
into the lumpy mass. It lay beside him,  
his masterpiece self-portrait, like him dead,  
only a little more stinking than his flesh  
and not much difference for long between them.

We buried it beside him, never spoke of it.  
We jailers learn too much we don't dare tell.  
Some nights I dream that the whole acropolis  
quakes into chaos and the long walls crumble  
golden Athena melts and this bright air  
glooms into prison dinness and the stench  
of Athens rotting.

Most of my poetry comes neither from vision nor from dream nor from day-dream. Most of it comes

from my own actual experience—yet I find that these poems too have many of the same characteristics, archetypal figures, symbolic associations. I don't ordinarily attempt to explain this, I simply use it, do it. But since this is a forum for explanations, I'll suggest that what is at work is a mythic *method of perception*. Most of what I write is structured by imagery, by specific metaphors in which one thing is identified as something other (this is one way poets rightly get the reputation of being liars, not leaders of society but its misleaders). This turning of things into what they are not is a kind of metamorphosis, which is again the god-act. I'd like to close with two poems drawn from my actual experience, in which the metaphors are deeply mythic. The first was written at a moment of terror and anguish, the night of my daughter Ellen's open-heart surgery.

#### INTENSIVE CARE

All night long  
inside the guarded doors  
on the top floor  
closest to nowhere  
my child blooms  
in that close-gardened hothouse  
cut spliced and grafted  
to burgeoning machines  
espaliered  
against the grilled bed  
  
And all night long  
in the waiting room  
the empty elevators  
open and close  
like mollusks  
on a dry beach

I don't want to belabor the interpretation of this poem, whose virtue probably is in its simplicity—but the dying child compared to a flower (or here rather to a young fruit tree) is a commonplace in myths of many peoples. And in the last stanza, the mollusks (which would ordinarily be signs of fertility, of Aphrodite rising from the sea), seen as empty, gasping on a dry beach, would seem to refer to the sterility and mourning of the mother-goddess when her child is taken from her. I did not have these symbols in mind consciously, and I hope that the reader *doesn't* notice these ancient connections. But I feel that they are there because the real situation was an archetypal one, and in being true to that real situation I naturally arrived at archetypal images.

The final poem I want to read is a case of dredging up mythic associations inherent in an absolutely trivial act—the weekly vacuuming of our swimming pool. It's one of those Sears-Roebuck above-the-ground round models with a plastic liner. It has to be vacuumed every week, else it will turn green with algae. I am the one that does it. But in this poem the real happening is for some reason presented as if a dream.

#### DREAMS OF AFFLUENCE

I am a housewife vacuuming  
her swimming pool. Under my toes

under the blue vinyl, moles  
hump their tunnels. The cat  
lays them pale and dripping at  
our doorstep. She has learned  
how to dive. The chlorine  
has bleached her white.  
You cannot tell her from a mole.  
I am diving through my life.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

"Invoke the Muse" first appeared in *Greensboro Review* and is included in *Carbon 14* (U. of Massachusetts Press, 1974). "The Brown Muses" appears here for the first time. "The Hit Man" appeared in *Cold Mountain Review*. "The String Lady" will be included in *Anthology of Contemporary N. C. Poetry* (U. of N. C. Press, 1976). "Certified Copy" appeared in *Review '74*. "Gestaltling the Dream," "Customs of the Esquimaux Women," "The String Lady," and "Dreams of Affluence" will be included in *There is No Balm in Birmingham* (Forthcoming from David R. Godine, Publisher, 1976). "The Death of Phidias" first appeared in *Carolina Quarterly* and is included in *Carbon 14*. "Intensive Care" first appeared in *Folio* and is included in *Poetics South* (John F. Blair, Publisher, 1974).

## ARTIST AS PRIESTESS—AND MAYBE PROPHET

by

Carter Delafield

(English)

In his discussion of the death of myth, Joseph Campbell points out the futility of trying to rejuvenate what has become meaningless. He reminds us, however, that though myth itself may be lost, man is never cut off entirely from myth's source—the human unconscious. It can be reached, as it always has been, by the imagination which makes connection between conscious and unconscious. As the artist creates out of the standard repertoire of mythic images of the collective unconscious, then, in a world without a living religion, the artist may replace the priest as interpreter of myth. That is, the tales of gods and heroes which inform a living religion may be replaced by the novel which the artist produces from some of the same source material.<sup>1</sup>

I choose to examine Virginia Woolf's *To the Lighthouse* on Campbell's terms. It seems an obvious choice as it makes primary use of one of the most familiar mythic patterns, the hero's journey, but it interests me also because the creative imagination behind it is feminine and, as a result, its vision seems to offer special insights into the human condition in the twentieth century.

This novel, often examined as an early experiment in the use of stream of consciousness, is not conventionally plotted. Such action as there is involves the mundane happenings in the Ramsay family on a summer afternoon and evening just before World War I, when a trip to a nearby lighthouse is considered, and of the same family, much changed, on a morning ten years later when the trip is finally undertaken. The two sections are separated by a short passage defining the changes and destruction inevitable with the passage of time and the chaos of war. Although the book begins and ends inside a feminine consciousness, it is structured to compare feminine and masculine patterns of thought and feeling. The first section, with the feminine image, "The Window," as its title, opposes the final section with the masculine symbol and title, "The Lighthouse." One of the book's major strengths is that its two main characters, Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay, each of whom dominates a section, function fully both as representations of masculine and feminine principles (the masculine equated with intellect, action, the daylight world, and the feminine with intuition, passivity, darkness) and as real people.

Mrs. Ramsay, the feminine consciousness of the first section, is woman in her conventional role as wife and mother. Indeed she is often seen by critics as an Earth Mother. She is a woman of fifty, still a great beauty, who has been the inspiration of more than one poet. She is wife of a philosopher-scholar, mother of eight talented children, and is bathed in the admiration of children, young people, and males of all ages. What is important here is Mrs. Ramsay's own feeling about her situation: she sits on her pedestal easily, accepting the adulation as her due. From her exalted position she looks down benignly on children, young people, and men and extends her nurturing instincts to them all indiscriminately, although her relationship with men is the most clearly defined.

Indeed she had the whole of the other sex under her protection; for reasons she could not explain, for their chivalry and valor, for the fact that they negotiated treaties, ruled India, controlled finance; finally for an attitude towards herself which no woman could fail to find agreeable, something trustful, childlike, reverential; which an old woman could take from a young man without loss of dignity, and woe betide the girl—pray Heaven it was none of her daughters!—who did not feel the worth of it, and all that it implied, to



the marrow of her bones!<sup>2</sup>

In this short passage, Mrs. Woolf has touched on some serious problems of the female position in the conventional male-female relationship, the confusions which seem to her to lead inevitably to destructive hostilities in even the strongest relationships. Mrs. Ramsay looks down from her pedestal, enjoying the "childlike, reverential" way men look up to her; at the same time she looks up to them as the masterful creators of political, financial, social order. This strange pattern of shifting supremacy is part of what has been taken for order and balance between the sexes: male supreme in the public sphere, female in the private. Mrs. Woolf would argue that such a pattern does not represent order but rather a basic disorder which, ironically, makes real civilization, real relationship, real order, impossible in both public and private spheres. In this scheme, the woman's admiration of masculine power and achievement may be real—in Mrs. Ramsay's case it certainly is—but in the end it is diverted from its seeming object, the male, and directed back to herself whom that male *looks up to* with such childlike trust. In traditional society, many men feel threatened by women and consider them domineering. In the situation as Virginia Woolf presents it, does this seem surprising?

The woman put on the pedestal is, of course, to some extent deified and in *To the Lighthouse* Mrs. Woolf suggests that there is more than one problem in attributing divinity to a being merely human. Mrs. Ramsay is not divine but she needs divine strength to be "she on whom life depends." I feel that Mrs. Ramsay's section of the book shows as clearly as any work of literature, psychology, or sociology the reality of the feminine position, the exhausting demands made on the woman when, as passive principle, she seems to be doing nothing. This is the book's longest section and, in nearly two hundred pages, Mrs. Ramsay does no more than sit at a window, dress for dinner, preside over a family dinner party, and spend a short evening sitting quietly reading.

However, if we look closely at only one part of that brief day through Mrs. Ramsay's eyes, we see the time crowded with activities. She is sitting in the window because she is posing for the picture Lily Briscoe, an artist at her easel on the lawn outside, is painting. She is reading to her six year old son, James, who is also serving as a model, and much of her energy goes into the difficult task of keeping a small child with a short attention span in the same position for an hour or more. She is knitting a sock. She is listening for the reassuring sounds that tell her the older children are at play and safe. She is matchmaking, mentally reviewing the arrangements for the dinner, worrying about a son who enjoys killing birds, about a maid who is unhappy. She is giving wordless emotional support to her husband who is on the terrace just outside, fighting with him, trying to keep peace between father and son who vie jealously for her attention and, finally, when the sitting is over, she is cleaning up, putting the room to rights, making it ready for the next activity.

These are only some of the things that have kept her occupied during the period of physical inactivity and, when she is finally alone, she finds herself emotionally exhausted. She is so tired that she finds she can rest only in "not thinking" and she imagines herself as a "wedge-shaped core of darkness."<sup>3</sup> The image is interestingly descriptive as the word *wedge* suggests something that is only part of a whole and the *core* of a thing is its essential part; here the essential part is darkness. The phrase suggests a self which is only a fragment of nothingness.

This is Mrs. Ramsay's dark view of herself, yet she insists that she is the happiest of women, happily married with all that woman could want, loving and loved by her husband and eight beautiful children. Virginia Woolf seems to suggest some disorder at the base of this ideal of femininity.

The image, I think, is central to the meaning of the book, and it is interesting to compare it to the visual image in Lily's painting in which Mrs. Ramsay and James serve as focal point but do not appear as the real-

istically portrayed mother and child of traditional art. Instead they are represented by a purple triangle. In the female artist's impressionistic vision, the conception of the maternal situation seems to echo that of the traditional female, as purple triangle echoes the wedge-shaped core of darkness.

This second use of what is essentially one image reinforces the idea of its importance in the novel and suggests that another look at Mrs. Ramsay's situation, seeing it as Lilly does, as the life at the center, may be enlightening. She has the major responsibility for the children, for meeting their child's need for love and security. Interestingly, her husband asks her for much the same thing, although he sees security in more adult terms. Cam, her child, needs reassurance that the boar's skull nailed on the nursery wall will not become a devouring beast in the dark; Mr. Ramsay wants to feel that his life and work will establish his fame even though his latest book is not his best. In a sense, both fear the same thing: the death's head in the dark.

Mrs. Ramsay gives, and gives gladly, providing a sense of security for others which, ironically, she cannot give herself, and which no one can give her. Under the sounds of domesticity she hears the ceaselessly pounding surf which threatens her with

the destruction of the island, its engulfment in the sea, and warned her whose days had slipped past in one quick doing after another that it was all ephemeral as a rainbow.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Ramsay's insecurity, her terror of the passage of time, is that of the female whose life is never her own but a series of "quick doings" which are her contributions to other people's lives. Because she feels that her life is un-lived, she is terrified of death; the beast in the dark is as real for her as for Cam, and there is no loving authority figure to make it less fearsome. Mr. Ramsay cannot fill the role and she does not believe in God, we are told. Mrs. Ramsay's is the existential dilemma; her desperate need is to find meaning in a world without myth. In one sense, she speaks for us all; in another, however, she is still the traditional female and in this paper is most usefully examined in that role.

Her attempt to come to terms with her fears creates the central scene. It is a dinner-party where an ill-assorted group of people at sixes and sevens with each other is transformed—through feminine skills with food, with setting, with people—into a harmonious group of communicants in a secular communion which, like its counterpart in the ritual of the Christian myth, transcends chaotic time to partake of the order and serenity of eternity. Words like *altar*, *reverence*, *devoted*, *mass*, *celebrate* sprinkled throughout the passage make the contrast between the warm security of the candlelit room and the howling darkness outside.

In what is perhaps an aside, may I suggest that this view of the dinner scene may offer an illuminating comment on the curiously obsessive domesticity that characterized the American culture in the decades after World War II. Perhaps here, too, there were unconscious attempts to create out of harmonious domestic moments a secular ritual to provide momentary revelation of some ordered security beyond evanescent time. If so, they were abortive like Mrs. Ramsay's, and Virginia Woolf, who wrote in 1925 about a summer evening just before World War I, shows why she thinks domesticity cannot substitute for live myth.

To see this, we must go back a moment to the beginning to look at Mr. Ramsay. In his mind's eye, he sees himself as an adventurer, captain of a ship making the hero's journey "to that fabled land where . . . frail barks founder in darkness . . ."<sup>5</sup> The book makes important comment on the situation of a modern hero for whom the arena of action is changed from the physical world to the mental: Mr. Ramsay is a scholar whose journey into the unknown is intellectual. He has gone farther than anyone before him in certain areas of philosophy to make original contributions to his discipline. Like the hero in ancient myth, he is in pursuit of truth, but for him it is objective, rational truth rather than spiritual truth arrived at through self-knowledge gained in the trials of the quest. Mr. Ramsay's truth is strangely one dimensional, arrived at by sepa-

rating himself from the world instead of by immersing himself in it.

The book's first sentence is "Yes, of course if it's fine tomorrow."<sup>6</sup> Mrs. Ramsay is speaking, answering her six year old son James, who has evidently asked if he can join the older ones in the next day's proposed visit to the lighthouse. Her permission assures him that he has reached the age of initiation: he is old enough to share the experiences of his older brothers and sisters and he is filled with joy. His father, however, overhears and destroys the moment for James by announcing that it won't be fine. He is infuriated with his wife.

The extraordinary irrationality of her remark, the folly of women's minds enraged him. . . . she flew in the face of facts, made his children hope what was utterly out of the question in effect, told lies. He stamped his foot on the stone step. "Damn you," he said. But what had she said? Simply that it might be fine tomorrow. So it might. Not with the barometer falling and the wind due west.

To pursue truth with such astonishing lack of consideration for other people's feelings, to rend the thin veils of civilisation so wantonly, so brutally, was to her so horrible an outrage of human decency that without replying, dazed and blinded, she bent her head as if to let the pelt of jagged hail, the drench of dirty water, bespatter her unrebuked. There was nothing to be said.

He stood by her in silence. Very humbly, at length, he said that he would step over and ask the Coastguards if she liked.

There was nobody whom she revered as she revered him.<sup>7</sup>

The passage is important in understanding a major point. Husband and wife are in sharp disagreement based on their different ways of viewing the world, but, after a moment of anger, they catch themselves and their deep love for each other resurfaces. For a moment, though, we have glimpsed the abyss that Woolf sees separating masculine and feminine. Not only do the two disagree, but each has contempt for the other's position. They smooth over the differences, but both feel guilty about the ambivalence in their feelings and both repress the ugly conflict that eats away in darkness at the fabric of their marriage.

Mr. Ramsay's anger seems inappropriately intense here until we learn that he considers himself a failure: his last book was not his best—indeed his best appeared before he was married. He feels that he would have travelled farther into philosophical truth if he had been free of the burden of responsibility for wife and children. Yet he loves them; they give him a precious sense of vitality which is not a part of the life of the mind. Bound in a conflict of needs in a love-hate relationship, he accepts the masculine commitment to protect those whom he feels doom him to mediocrity. Ironically, he lumps wife and children together: he does not see his wife as an equal, an adult who can help him bear the burden of family responsibility.

Through Mr. Ramsay, we see Mrs. Woolf's statement on the nature of the pressure for success put on the male in our culture. She makes a sharp comment on the definition of success in a competitive society when she shows us a man who is one of the few men of his age to make a genuinely original contribution to philosophy but who still sees himself a failure, and is so seen by other men. Success seems to mean being the best *one*, with anything less considered valueless. To make matters worse, Mr. Ramsay not only competes with others but sets himself against himself. He measures what he has done against what he might have done if he had no other interests or commitments.

The complicating result of all this is that he turns, in need and humiliation, to the one he holds responsible, asking for her reassurance and support. In so doing, he puts himself in competition with his own six year old child, as husband, wife, and child are all well aware. In the inequalities of this conventional marriage relationship, each partner must give more psychic energy than he or she possesses to care for the other as if that other



were a child. Marriage for the Ramsays does not symbolize the creative harmony of the universe as ancient myth would have it, or "the mystical union betwixt Christ and his Church" as the Anglican marriage service terms it; rather it is an uneasy relationship concealing a chaos of frustration, contempt, and anger which love alone is powerless to transcend. The candlelit dining room may seem secure and orderly but the howling storm is a reality beneath the social surface as well as in the darkness beyond the window pane.

If we look at the focal point of Lily's picture at the moment when Mr. Ramsay invades the scene, the purple triangle assumes a new dimension. It is not an abstraction of the figures of mother and child but a distortion of the Holy Family of father, mother, son. The geometric form is peculiarly appropriate, and purple is the appropriate color for the passions inflamed by the competition of father and son. It is not surprising to find that Lily is unable to finish her picture. We understand, although she does not, what she means when she says that something is wrong at the center.

The disharmony in the private world where the female resigns is reflected in the public world where male dominates, and creates irrational chaos instead of rational order. The darkly beautiful lyric interlude, "Time Passes," creates that chaos in its most intense form, war adding man-made destruction to the natural destruction inherent in the passage of time. A Ramsay son is blown to bits on the battlefield; a daughter dies in childbirth; Mrs. Ramsay herself dies. The marriage is over and the family broken when the final section, "The Lighthouse," opens.

As counterpart to the passivity in the first section, it concerns itself with action, the journey to the lighthouse, an event of no significance except as a pathetic attempt on Mr. Ramsay's part to transcend time by denying change. After all these years Mr. Ramsay still misses his dead wife cruelly and he hopes to feel close to her in reliving the experience of the past. Strangely, what Mrs. Woolf shows us is that through Mr. Ramsay's foolish determination to "fly in the face of fact to deny truth," as he used to accuse his wife of doing, time is indeed transfigured, the pointless journey becomes a true hero's journey on which the Ramsay children are in a real sense reborn.

Just as in any traditional retelling of the myth, the journey extends outward in space and inward into self. There are, in fact, two journeys, masculine and feminine: Mr. Ramsay's to the lighthouse and Lily Briscoe's into her own consciousness as she attempts to recreate the picture she could not complete ten years earlier.

As the sailors set forth, we find that Mr. Ramsay is no longer the hero; James, now sixteen, is the reluctant helmsman. Both he and his slightly older sister, Cam, are angry with their father for forcing them to make this ridiculous trip, but before they reach their destination both have been given the hero's boon—the enlightenment that transforms life. Through stream of consciousness, we follow each child on an inward journey where past and present are integrated; past relationships with their mother, present encounter with their father become parts of a whole. Feminine and masculine viewpoints are merged into a new and larger vision for each child—a harmonious, androgynous vision of experience.

As they move farther and farther out from land, Cam (who is depicted as the passive female much like her mother) looks back to their house on the shore. She sees it first in the traditional feminine way as the place where one has one's being, where one is protected. As it grows smaller, diminished by distance, it loses the familiarity that makes it home and she sees it from a new and exciting perspective. She is on a journey and she sees home as heroes have always seen it—a place to go forth from. Old memories flood her consciousness, stimulated by her new view of home. She has been imaginatively nurtured by her mother, intellectually stimulated by her father, protected by both and now, made strong by their loving gifts, she is ready for the future.

She gazed back over the sea, at the island. . . . It was very small; it was very distant. The sea was more important than the shore. Waves were all around them, tossing and sinking,

with a log wallowing down one wave; a gull riding on another. About here, she thought, dabbling her fingers in the water a ship had sunk, and she murmured, dreamily half asleep, how we perished each alone.<sup>8</sup>

The terrors of the sea, of destruction and death which so overwhelmed Mrs. Ramsay but from which she gave her children security, seem part of adventure to Cam as Mr. Ramsay has always taught her they were. So well have her parents between them prepared her for the voyage “to that fabled land where all perish in darkness”<sup>9</sup> that already, to Cam, it seems like home.

Where Cam began her journey looking backward, James, the male looks forward. He has watched the lighthouse from home all through early childhood summers, seeing it as a guiding light shining out of darkness. Now, approaching it, he sees it as a stark tower, striped in black and white, built on rock. Briefly, he is confused by the philosopher’s, his father’s, question which he asks himself, “What is real?” But in a moment he has the answer. “Nothing is simply one thing.”<sup>10</sup> Both views are real and what their reality is for James is conveyed to the reader through symbol. The light is feminine, intuitive understanding, a guide through the dark unconscious, and it is also masculine intellectual understanding (black and white?) a guide through the daylight rational world. Both Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay believed in truth, but neither could understand the other’s conception of it. James and Cam, however, now understand both, and will have both reason and intuition to guide them on their own search. By the time they land at the lighthouse, they are eager for their first encounter, ready for whatever comes.

Simultaneously, Lily Briscoe is making her journey into self in her act of artistic creation. As she stands at the same spot she chose for her earlier picture, she struggles again with the problems of order and balance. As she repeats earlier action, she makes her journey into the past and as old memories and feelings about that earlier time emerge helter-skelter from her unconscious. In a moment of revelation, this older Lily realizes that her old view of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay was distorted and inaccurate. For her, Mrs. Ramsay, who gave so much to others, had loomed too large; Mr. Ramsay, who asked so much of others, she had pushed into the background because she feared his demands. Re-examining old memories, she now sees the two as partners in a deep and passionate love. Each is human, limited, flawed: Mrs. Ramsay goes beyond giving others what they need to deciding for them what that should be. She values intuition at the expense of intellect. Mr. Ramsay, on the other hand, has cultivated intellect at the expense of intuition and, knowing nothing about other people’s feelings, concentrates entirely on his own, demanding constantly that others meet his needs. The miracle, the mystery that Lily suddenly sees is in the view of these two different people when looked at as one couple. In their love for each other she sees them as One, male and female *in combination* symbolizing wholeness and order in the universe. With this new insight her artistic vision clears momentarily and, instead of the purple triangle which produced something wrong at the center, she now draws a single line, the simple symbol of the union of equals. With this stroke, the balance of her painting is created, its disparate parts drawn together in vital tension. For an instant she has penetrated eternity; as she says to herself, she has had her vision.

At the book’s end, Lily has shown us Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay both partaking of divinity. They never for a minute lose their humanity; their life together has been full of imperfection, the painful conflicts of inequality but, in spite of it all, their love has created order in the lives of their children. They are immortal guides, leading James and Cam to the double vision, the internal order of androgyny. As in all mysteries, there is paradox. Experiences with mother and father are merged ultimately into the experience of the One.

The title of this paper is “Artist as Priestess—and Maybe Prophet.” So far I have dealt with the first part of that title, attempting to show Virginia Woolf as interpreter—or e-interpreter—of ancient mythic materials



to reveal their special relevance for our times, their vitality as secular personal myth. Here at the end let us consider the artist as prophet, prophet in the sense of one who sees the future. *To the Lighthouse*, written in 1925, shows the traditional male-female relationship creating a new kind of individual. In our own time, we are seeing the destruction of the old rigid male-female relationship, or at least seeing the destruction of the idea of that relationship as the only acceptable one. The book, then, may be showing us a vision of possibility for our future. Perhaps we are creating, out of the ruin of the old, a new definition of being human as Mrs. Woolf does in James and Cam. These two, very different from each other, but both incorporating qualities which have traditionally been considered *both* male and female, are beginning to appear among us in everyday life. Having created these characters, does not Mrs. Woolf suggest the possibility of new patterns, in which masculinity and femininity will be combined in androgynous individuals in many new ways? These individuals, encountering each other as equals may develop new kinds of loving male-female relationships which can, in the future, become new living symbols of cosmic harmony.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> See Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology* (New York: The Viking Press, 1970).

<sup>2</sup> Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1927), p. 13.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 50-51.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 284.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 297.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 277.

MARRIAGE AND THE PURITAN MYTH, or  
'Sex and the Single Girl' in the Eighteenth Century,  
in which

Salacious Ladies are Leared at by the  
Lecturer, and the Titillated Public  
Storms Madly Out Upon the Heath, Etc., Etc.

by  
Bruce L. Wilson  
(English)

The subject for this session of our Myth Colloquium is the way in which two 18th century novelists perceive the social and economic predicament of women within a context of Puritan and Middleclass beliefs. The connections that this discussion may have with myth, other than the flagrant contrivance of sticking the word in my title, will, I hope, become evident along the way. Meantime, some may already perceive another connection in a commoner meaning of the word "myth"—namely that I am at this very moment perpetuating the myth that a man can say anything new (or true) about Women's Liberation, or the Feminine Condition. (Or so extremists would say.) Actually, this is perhaps a true observation, but it is not my fault: for if, in her famous study *The Second Sex* (1949) Simone de Beauvoir is correct in asserting that, essentially, woman's condition today has not changed from previous centuries, then—if *that is true*—there could be nothing new about women in any age that a poor—"mythic"!—ex-male chauvinist could possibly "confess" at any time. Let us hope, however, that at least as regards the problem of Puritans and matrimony, my remarks here may suggest that there have been some slight and favorable changes in the lot of woman, since the 18th century.<sup>1</sup>

The two "single girls" whose "sex life" we are going to explore are fictional ladies: Daniel Defoe's Moll Flanders, heroine of an autobiographical novel by that name written in 1722, and Samuel Richardson's Clarissa Harlowe, also heroine of a novel by that name, written in 1748.

One reason for pairing these two novels is a purely vulgar interest in the contrasting historical responses to them: in recent years we have had a bad movie about Moll Flanders (the least fault of which was that Kim Novak played her inadequately), and her story is still often read, perhaps because of its title, which I quote in full:

The Fortunes and Misfortunes of the Famous Moll Flanders, Who was Born in Newgate, and during a life of continued Variety of Threescore Years, besides her Childhood, was Twelve year a Whore, five times a wife (whereof once to her own Brother), Twelve Year a thief, Eight year a transported Felon in Virginia, at last grew Rich, liv'd honest, and Died a Penitent.

By contrast, we will probably never have a movie about Clarissa Harlowe, and hardly anyone reads her lamentable tale, except such students as teachers can bully through a condensed version of the nine volumes that compose it. You can read *Moll Flanders* between New York City and San Francisco on a jet flight. You could read *Clarissa* on a year-long sea cruise. Anyhow, let me give the full title of Richardson's novel:

Clarissa, or the History of a Young Lady, comprehending the most Important

Concerns of Private Life and particularly shewing the Distresses that may attend  
the Misconduct both of Parents and Children, in relation to Marriage.

There you have it—just a hint of possibly spicy things to come in the “concerns of private life,” then all washed away in the dull flood of stuff about parents and children and misconduct. Absolutely guaranteed to fend off modern browsers at a “Prodigy Bookstore.”

But in the 18th century it was generally the other way around. Some read *Moll Flanders* for salacious, lurid delight, others for a moral enlightenment which they were at some difficulty to worry out of it. But everybody read *Clarissa*. Two years on the best-seller list, since it took that long to serialize the nine volumes, and in the meantime the moral-minded and the salacious-minded, alike, read each issue avidly and worried, wept, and expostulated in letters to her creator about Clarissa's troubles and her death—just as people do nowadays about TV soap operas, which is what *Clarissa* superficially seems most like. And all—unlike Defoe with his candid, sometimes Billingsgate, or gutter, language—all in Richardson's novel, done with perfect taste and modesty . . . over one million words with never a slip: nine volumes of pious prose, without a drop of wit!

The unlikely pairing of underground vice and middle-class virtue seems reflected also in the authors: Daniel Defoe, jack of all trades, bankrupt merchant, hack journalist, political propagandist, 18th century version of a CIA agent, dweller in prisons and once also in the humiliating public stocks . . . and by contrast Samuel Richardson, highly successful publisher, prim and proper . . . so proper that he communicates with his printing-house workmen only by written messages, never in person . . . prim composer of letter-writing guides for polite ladies, and conversationalist and confidant of female drawing rooms.

However, I also link Moll and Clarissa because—despite differences—both literary heroines illustrate a typical plight of women in the 18th century: Simply, how is one to gain security, recognition of individual worth, any human dignity, in a male-dominated society where marriage is the only ‘genteel’ possibility for women, but where it is arranged on purely business principles? This general plight of Moll and Clarissa is further intensified by the special fact that both are isolated, without family or equivalent resources to support them in their struggle to find a port in the socio-economic storm. Most literary heroines of the 18th century are happily surrounded by kindly father figures, romantic male protectors or female guardians, who help them through the dangerous educational trials of faux pas and fops in masquerade balls, pleasure gardens, assemblies, and teas. But not Moll and Clarissa. Their authors make them outsiders, rigorously cut them off from all communal supports and force them upon their own invention.

Now, this authorial insistence on the heroine's isolation is significant, and leads to our primary interest—our *mythic* interest—in them. For despite the differences in careers just noted, both Defoe and Richardson came from tradesman stock and were raised in the tradition of English religious Dissent, that is of Puritanism. This means that both were fed in their youth large helpings of standard Puritan documents and literary works—not only the *Bible*, but also (for instance) John Milton's epics *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained*, a variety of spiritual biographies and autobiographies, including Foxe's *Book of Martyrs* (a collection of sententious histories of the Protestant martyrs, or “saints,” if that term is appropriate to them), and certainly and notably John Bunyan's allegory *Pilgrim's Progress*.

And this fact means, in turn, that Defoe and Richardson early ingested what we may designate as a Puritan archetype involving the individual human being's journey from a fall (from a Paradise) to redemption (to a New Jerusalem). It is this archetypal pattern, generating in their cultural tradition, that invests Defoe's and Richardson's two secular novels with a rich complexity, in the faint reverberations it sets up of the

presence of a divine destiny or a Providence operating in the affairs of Moll and Clarissa.

But I have just used the magic word "archetype," and so before going on let me indicate how I approach the problem of myth in literature. For one thing, I approach it very carefully, circling at a distance with my guard up. I am not a "myth" or "archetypal" critic by formal education or disposition, only made so by extreme, amateur reluctance—when Necessity calls, so to speak. It is one thing to seek primordial images of universal human rituals and beliefs in the pre-literate folk art of song and saga—to search out fundamental modes of experience—say of romance or of tragedy—expressed in the myth critic's metaphors of spring, summer or winter—or breakfast, lunch and dinner! It is another and cautionary matter to seek in sophisticated written art the deepest beliefs of a race or culture—especially so in the case here of a not-very-antique religious group which has strong impulses to redefine itself in relatively modern socio-economic terms.

Having made this cautionary observation, let me hasten to say that a sophisticated, self-conscious literary work—to the extent that it and its maker are products of a culture—is surely approachable in mythic—or as I prefer it—approachable in archetypal perspectives. At the risk of compounding confusion at this point let me cite one mythic critic, Dorothy Van Ghent, who refers to myth as a "dramatic vision of life" whose truth is immune to logical proof, empirical demonstration or physical fact. As this might serve as well for a general definition of literature, let us add her qualification that we find myth in literature when, in an individual work, the "particular set of manners (or actions) represented is organized in a total symbolic construct of such a kind that it not only reflects the aspirations and ideas, the attitudes and customs, of a large social group, but also seems to give these attitudes and customs the sanction of some higher authority. . . ." By "dramatic vision of life" I take Professor Van Ghent to mean that some deep-rooted, immemorial pattern of response to human existence has come to have, or has taken, "a local habitation and a name," has concretized in literary images of particular *personae* doing and talking—but which images still retain, or continue to evoke, the larger and earlier (and perhaps unconsciously held) core of cultural meaning. It is this larger dimension of meaning that she refers to in the suggestion that the attitudes or ideas of the group are given a "higher authority."

Now, in this abbreviated context of definition, let me restate what it is we look at here. Our subject is, first of all, the fictional travails of two typical 18th century women, Moll and Clarissa, as Defoe and Richardson articulate them in the circumstantial, realistic details of their novels. Second, our subject is the way in which these secular stories reflect, or dramatize, the particular complex of Puritan and Puritan-oriented, middle-class attitudes and beliefs about women and sex, about parents and children—*female* children—and about property and economic life—all centered around the issue of marriage. Now, in part, the phrase in my title, "Puritan Myth," refers to this complex of beliefs and not—obviously!—to some mythological story or Puritan folk tale.

Yet there is, after all, a Puritan folk tale, a "Puritan Myth". It is a particular version of the Christian myth from *Genesis* to *Revelation*. Beyond this obvious referent of the term, however, our concern is with the fact that the 17th and 18th century Puritan himself "dramatizes life as a vision." (It might be more accurate to insist that he *allegorizes* life as a vision.) However, because this particular Puritan vision contains figures and patterns that are components of other myths, I would prefer to speak of it as the "Puritan archetype." And this phrase is appropriate, also, because the characteristic figure and circumstance of the Puritan's dramatic vision stand, in cultural and chronological relationship to Defoe and Richardson, as the "original pattern" from which their versions are drawn or which they echo. Finally, the Puritan archetype is, itself, reiterative of more ancient configurations of human experience—archetypes of the figure of outcast



and wanderer, and of the circumstance of fall and journey. As the ancient archetypes lend to the dramatic vision of life of the English Dissenter a sense of some "higher authority" with which he is "in tune," so also do both provide extra dimensions of meaning to the novels we are looking at.

Thus, our total concern is with the complex, dynamic interaction of ancient "archetype" and Puritan "type," with these and that set of socio-economic and marital beliefs that go by the label of "Puritan myth," and with all these and the realistic fictional worlds of our two 18th century novels. For it seems to me undeniably evident that there is a central archetypal pressure operative in *Moll Flanders* and *Clarissa Harlowe*, in the underlying patterning, or construct, of secular details in both novels, and especially in their suggestive religious coloring of descriptive phrase and metaphor. And this archetypal pressure affects Defoe's and Richardson's responses to the social matrix in which their heroines exist, and in turn affects our understanding of what their works "mean," in the broadest, humanistic sense.

But I have digressed long enough. Let us look directly at this Puritan archetype, as rendered in the powerful images of the opening sentences from the greatest of Puritan allegories, *Pilgrim's Progress*:

As I walked through the wilderness of this world, I lighted on a certain place where was a Den, and I laid me down in that place to sleep; and as I slept, I dreamed a dream. I dreamed, and behold I saw a man clothed with rags, standing in a certain place, with his face from his own house, a book in his hand, and a great burden upon his back. I looked, and saw him open the book and read therein: and, as he read, he wept, and trembled; and not being able longer to contain, he brake out with a lamentable cry, saying "What shall I do?"

Ignoring the framework of the dream—the sign of allegory—let us consider the central image: the silhouetted ragged figure against an opaque background, face turned away from house and kindred, alone upon this gray landscape, with *Bible* in hand, and uttering the great and terrible Protestant and Puritan lament, "What shall I DO to be saved?" The burden he bears is that of the individual soul, threatened with eternal damnation, seeking in Holy Scripture (and in the visible world) for a personal sign, a signal, of God's redemptive grace. The Puritan myth—that is to say, the Puritan *version* of the Christian myth—differs from the Roman Catholic, and somewhat from the Anglican, in its acute emphasis on individual effort, as contrasted to their emphasis on redemption as possible through institutional intervention, both in institutional interpretation of Scripture and in the intercessory action of Holy Virgin, Saints, and Priest. I oversimplify the Catholic and Anglican positions, of course, but only to emphasize first the Protestant—and second and particularly the Puritan—position.

Let us consider, again, this solitary figure, whose energy is caught in the moment of heroic tension, of what to do now, under the eternal aspect of God's scheme of things, in which the individual's role is vital but to him unknown, and for whom there is no tutor, advisor, or guide. The revolutionary impulse in Puritanism—going back to Luther—is to cut the individual free from inherited traditions, institutional aid, national laws, social customs, even home and family, and to set him down in the wilderness to find his own path to salvation in the terrible sight of a distant and inscrutable God.

There are many variations possible to be worked on this pattern, mostly having to do with whether individual damnation or salvation is predestined absolutely, but the point we must stick to here is that Defoe and Richardson, writers of realistic fiction, grew up in the context of belief that in the fall of a single sparrow or of a single woman may be manifested the history of the type, the ontological-teleological purpose of things. And so the Puritan of necessity must constantly interpret each gesture, action, event, impulse of will and scriptural passage to locate his place in the entire scheme of Creation. This powerful



instinct for typology—that is, the interpretative method by which the Puritan unites historical past with present and with future design, linking each human life to the eternal pattern and meaning of mankind's existence—this instinct for typology is present behind Defoe and Richardson's novelistic interests in the circumstantial, seemingly random, accumulating details of the activity of Moll and Clarissa.<sup>2</sup>

One other important fact: our Puritan spiritual champion *Every-Man* turns out to be, in “real life,” *Business-Man*. That is, the tradition which sees the human drama as a revolutionary individual spiritual struggle for salvation has a secular version. Thus in contrast to older, communal forms of economic activity, we find in Defoe and Richardson's time (and a bit earlier) a new, emancipated economic individualist struggling for material success and through it for social status. We must recall that English Dissenters were effectively barred from the professions in England in the 17th century, and forced into industry and trade—just at the historical juncture when industrial and commercial economic possibilities were opening up. In consequence of these historical factors, Puritans are suddenly discovered to be in economic life—as they have been in spiritual life—proponents of a “laissez faire” attitude—conveniently too, when one's material success might be interpreted as a sign of personal spiritual grace. Historians have argued that Protestantism was not required historically as a seed bed for capitalism, since capitalism also germinated in autocratic and Roman Catholic countries; but Puritanism and economic individualism in England cross-fertilized each other very well indeed in these times, and when one speaks of the 18th century (commercial) middle-class, one must recognize its connection with religious Dissent.

In consequence, then, we find Defoe and Richardson, tradesmen and Puritan-raised, writing for a middle-class, novel-reading audience of similar origins and interests. And we find them writing of the adventures of two women for whom the cry of Bunyan's archetypal Puritan has become in a socio-economic context, “What shall *I do* to gain economic security, social freedom, personal dignity?” Our heroines' particular struggles take different routes: Moll Flanders is a feminine entrepreneur, an economic individualist; Clarissa Harlowe is a feminine saint, a spiritual individualist. Their fulfillments—that is, the forms of salvation—vary also: Moll triumphs in this world, Clarissa in the next. But both Defoe and Richardson treat the socio-economic situations of their heroines in typologically suggestive terms of the Puritan archetype of individual fallen woman (or man), striving to return by some route to a second Eden, to be restored to Grace.

But let me stop here with these generalized comparisons and historical frameworks, and discuss the affairs of each heroine in brief detail, after which the comparisons, archetypal implications, and humanistic meanings of the novels may be clearer. Let us start with Moll Flanders.

Moll's beginnings (the setting of the novel is the 1680's) are typical of many lower class women of Defoe's age. She is born in Newgate prison of a condemned criminal mother, abandoned to gypsies, and during early childhood educated in a parish school to go into domestic service. But Moll early reveals extraordinary quickness of mind and a talent for playing roles in society, and in addition a great desire to be “genteel.” In her early teens she is taken into a middle-class family, where she acquires by mimicry the same sufficient, social education as the young ladies of the house—smattering of French, smattering of musical training and dancing, smattering of polite learning, tricks of conversation and gesture. It is here too that she blossoms into physical beauty.

However, Moll lacks a family to provide her a dowry . . . or anyhow, she lacks a dowry. And in this defect she quickly discovers the central fact about life for the single woman, which is that marriage is a tool for male economic and social dominance, and has become almost predominantly a property transaction.

It hadn't always been so. If marriage in feudal times was also a commercial transaction, or anyhow a political matter—a means of acquiring castles—the simultaneous rise of Protestantism and early capitalism brought forth, according to historians, a new concept of marriage—as a companionship of mutual aid and affection, the wife dutiful to husband, the husband loyal and loving to the wife. The archetype for this relationship is rendered memorably in John Milton's image—not of one figure—but of the two figures, Adam and Eve, driven from Paradise, “taking hand in hand their solitary way” into a new world of material difficulties. The economic basis for this view of marriage as one of mutual aid and affection is the early and marginal domestic capitalism where all the family live in quarters above the tradesman shop, and must work together to guarantee their collective economic survival.

However, note that this archetypal image of the two figures of mutuality is not present in Milton's contemporary John Bunyan. Rather, Mr. Christian sets out first on the journey to New Jerusalem; Mrs. Christian and the kiddies must wait for the sequel—the second volume—of *Pilgrim's Progress* to follow him. So also, as commercial and production capitalism develops through the late 17th century in England, that image of Bunyan is reflected in the wife's decreasing usefulness to the husband as helpmeet. Industry and trade leave the home for factory and retail store. Profits and property begin to accumulate. The domestic duties and useful work of the lady are slowly replaced by goods and services purchased by the economic profits of the husband. The wife becomes of use primarily as a decoration to display one's wealth, as a means to create heirs and preserve one's wealth, or as a means of acquiring more wealth through her marriage portion.

The concept of mutual affection thus gets replaced by a consideration of how to accumulate, preserve, and pass along wealth. What Milton said—already an old sexist attitude—of the marriage of Adam and Eve in Paradise—“He for God only, she for God in him” becomes in the secular world, ‘He for the market only, she for the market through him’. The other function, providing an heir, is the occasion for requiring absolute premarital female chastity—nothing new, of course, since the first medieval baron collected his first two castles. But if the woman is going to produce a proper heir—that is, a child presumably minimally recognizable to the father as his—if she is to produce this legitimate son for the legitimate passing on of wealth, then she must not be flawed, tarnished, of dubious market quality.

In such a sticky situation the question, as Defoe sets it in *Moll Flanders*, is this. How are women to achieve any degree of freedom of choice of action and personal dignity, where they have not personal wealth? Since Moll is single, without family, without money, she is instantly in difficulty. For marriage is the *only* respectable, genteel, profession. And though Moll is witty and beautiful, these attributes are nothing without money. If you do not get married, please remember, there are three things generally that you as a woman can do: go into service, go into a lowly trade, or go into sin. None is genteel.

Obviously, then, there is only one thing that you *can* do: with a dowry you trade your sex on the open, legitimate market for a husband; without a dowry you trade your sex on the illicit market, in order to get the dowry. For, says Defoe, the world of marriage and family is run on strictly business and monetary principles. So, since one way or another you are selling yourself to some one, the important thing for the single woman is to sell herself for the greatest financial and social return. There is no moral issue at all here, only the cash-nexus.

Since Moll desires to live as genteely as possible in a hostile environment she sells herself as prostitute so as to get married. In this, she has merely joined an old and socially respectable profession in the only possible way, by joining an even older, less respectable one!

But through the ups and downs of getting married five times, Moll acquires much experience and evolves

a set of maxims. I call them THE SAYINGS OF MADAME MOLL.

Madame Moll's first saying is that "A Woman should never be kept for a mistress that has money to make herself a wife." Moll's troubles in this area stem from a couple of imprudent early marriages—she marries a man she loves, only to have him turn out to be an improvident highwayman; she marries a man she likes who promptly goes into bankruptcy, taking her small hoard of coins with him. And so she has periodically to restore her bank account by becoming, periodically, mistress or whore. This works reasonably well until at age forty-nine, or thereabouts, she finds herself no longer physically attractive as a mistress. At this critical juncture there is revealed to her—as if by the hand of Providence—thievery as a means of acquiring the investment capital for a man. Now, in these later years, as a criminal entrepreneur, she develops further sayings. Here are some of them:

"Love has nothing to do with security."

"Dishonesty is preferable to despair."

"Crime is preferable to death."

"It is better to act and repent, than to despair and die."

Not all these maxims are in Moll's exact words, but they reflect her sentiments, and they reveal the London world that Defoe paints to be a jungle—sordid, grim, morally a dead universe. Money is the root of all values. Love and friendship have no place, nor do inner conviction or purity of intention, only external rectitude and the appearance of material success. Two more sayings of Moll: "Marry for love and be ruined." "Tell a man all, and be robbed." In the competitive jungle those survive only who are energetic, practical, have a quick eye to the providential main chance, and not too much conscience—*business virtues, all*. But like the upwardly-mobile tradesman of Defoe's times who works his business in the City of London to buy a Georgian townhouse in the West End, profits for Moll are only means to an end. Another saying, not hers but Defoe's in a way: "The Wages of Sin is not Death, but a new husband and restored respectability."

Moll's goals and methods are identical to those of the male-dominated, economic-oriented society, and what Defoe does is to provide in his novel a higher sanction for this economic entrepreneurship in the vocabulary and value system of religious belief. Thus for Puritan tradesman and heroine Moll active virtue is hustling twice as hard as the person in the shop next door, or the hooker down the street. The sign of Providence is an economic windfall—a husband who conveniently dies, leaving you more than you thought he had, or a bolt of expensive cloth you discover lying unguarded on some store-front table. Heaven blesses one's industry, frugality and cleverness with the sound of silver, permits one to stop being a criminal and provides opportunity for social repentance at leisure and outside a jail. Marriage becomes the confessional booth in which one is self-absolved of any guilty thoughts one might have had about how one got there. Charity is not hurting others unnecessarily—making sure that the small child goes *happily* homeward after you have lured her into an alley to heist her pearl necklace. Hell is bankruptcy, or debtor's prison. And the condition of Grace is not having to lie, cheat or steal any longer, or is a place where neither rumors of past notorieties nor starvation nor the bailiff can enter. The great maxim derivable from all this for women who wish to be economically free and possess a sense of societal dignity is this—and it is the epitomizing saying that one can apply to Defoe's version of the twin Puritan impulses to economic and spiritual "laissez faire":

"God Helps those only, who help themselves first."

Moll Flanders begins life an outcast from Eden. Her wanderings, excursions, into so-called sin and crime are but means to find a secular paradise of social ease and gentility. When she is finally caught as a thief, and lodged in Newgate prison, like her mother, against the day of execution, she undergoes a variety of



despair, a “dark night of the soul,” but is rescued by fortuitous circumstances that see her at first transported as a condemned felon to America, and then released from that bondage by the miraculous power of secreted personal wealth which the authorities did not know she had. In the end she wins through to a second Eden: at age seventy she retires with a husband to a small plantation in rural Virginia—literally a garden, figuratively a Paradise. Here she enjoys the society of other respectable Virginia planters—the true company of the commercially elect. And here, she concludes with empty sententiousness, she plans to spend the remainder of her years “in a sincere penitance for the wicked lives we have lived.”

If her sense of wickedness is problematical, the complacency with which she reviews her Puritan Horatio Alger success story is not. Moll has won a triumph and achieved a social equality with men within the rules of the socio-economic game established by men. The question of the ragged Puritan, “What shall I do?” has been vigorously answered by the blessings of a commercial Providence; and the figure who asked it is no longer clothed in rags but in riches—sign of her election—and is no longer turned away from home but united among the assembly of saints, under the economic aspect of eternity!

Let us turn now to the different world of Samuel Richardson’s novel *Clarissa*. In recounting our second heroine’s adventures we can afford to be concise, since a great deal of the novel consists of sentimental expressions, rather than of actions. What happens can be rather simply put: for some four or five volumes on end Clarissa is in danger of being raped; then she is raped; then for three or four volumes on end she is in danger of dying; then she dies.

Now, what *is* important is what this minimal action means in terms of Puritan attitudes towards marriage: and for this we must attend to Clarissa’s initial situation in her family. When we first meet her she is eighteen, beautiful, and utterly virtuous. Her family is established upper middle-class, with vast wealth from commerce and estates, and desirous of entering the peerage. The basic problem is that of property marriage. The Harlowe family is a patriarchal clan, and father, uncles, and cousins have united to put all their hopes on the eldest son James. If they can concentrate enough sheer weight of money and property on James, he can marry high in the aristocracy and hope for the social bliss of a title. The problem is Clarissa. First, her grandfather had ignored the needs of the clan and willed his estate directly to Clarissa, thus depleting the family wealth being concentrated on brother James. Second, Clarissa is an obstacle because the dowry needed to marry her off in a higher social bracket will deplete the family fortune considerably. Also, there is an older, surly sister to be got married off first. Meanwhile, Clarissa has attracted the attention of the handsome, charming, aristocratic rake-hell, Lovelace, himself certain to come into a peerage on the death of his uncle. Should Clarissa marry Lovelace—though that would take an enormous dowry—then the Harlowe uncles and cousins might well switch their wealth to back the filly in the social race. This prospect does not make James and the jealous sister happy. Now, Clarissa has like a dutiful daughter given over to her father control of her estate, so that she is like Moll Flanders, without independent wealth to permit her independence of action. In addition, Clarissa has no family support, for—besides the hostility of siblings—the others in the family are hostile to her marrying Lovelace. For the clan, then, she is an obstacle to be removed immediately, and the way they choose to do this is to marry her off to a vulgar, ugly, illiterate money-man, Solmes, who is beneath the Harlowes in class standing and so will demand only the grandfather’s estate as a dowry. Unfortunately for the family, Clarissa reveals a rare stubbornness and refuses to marry Solmes. In doing so she is within the unwritten social rights of the time: for while children could not marry without parental consent, parents were not morally free to force their children to marry reprehensible mates.

Clarissa rather humbly suggests that if the family will only let her alone and not try to force her to marry Solmes, she will give up her interest in Lovelace and remain a spinster—depending on doles from her hard-

hearted father for a living. This economic and social enslavement in family spinsterdom is the price she is willing to pay for the relative freedom not to marry Solmes. Now, Clarissa's underlying desire is simply to be her own person and be free, but partly from regarding her as an inferior item—a female—and partly from greed and blind desire for social status, Clarissa's family ignore her offer of compromise, and regard her as perversely selfish, resistant to authority, and traitorously in love with Lovelace. She is for them, after all, only a marketable good to be kept in undamaged condition until the proper buyer comes along. Here, once again, we see that the earlier Puritan conception of marriage as a harmony of husband and wife, sanctioned by Heaven, and designed to alleviate the loneliness of the human condition through affection, need, and loyalty has, under the middle-class pressure for upward economic and social mobility, given way to the view—now dominant in the mid-18th century—of marriage as a business proposition.

Forced by an intolerable home situation to take desperate measures, Clarissa makes a fatal mistake. She leaves the Harlowe household unchaperoned, and for a variety of reasons throws herself on the false generosity and protection of the one man she likes, the aristocratic Lovelace. Now she is truly like Moll Flanders, with no money and no family, entirely isolated in the social wilderness. For Lovelace is no friend, but an enemy. He detests the middle-class, its social climbing and pompous class values, especially its ideals of feminine prudery, or “delicacy” as the age called it, which are deemed necessary to preserve chastity before marriage. Lovelace is the product of the 17th century Cavalier tradition: he has no belief in love and harmony in marriage. Marriage is a necessity, but an enslavement of the male. He believes that women have no souls, that they are simply objects to be used. He believes that they pretend delicacy out of feminine hypocrisy—that beneath their prudery they lust after men, and use coyness as a sexual trap. Lovelace, then, driven by his own class pride and self-love, hating Puritanical codes of conduct and the pompous middle-class, decides that he must win Clarissa over on his terms. He must humble her, seduce her—rape her if she won't submit—and then having established himself and his code over women and the middle-class by this symbolic action, he can marry her if he chooses, or keep her as a mistress, entirely on his own terms.

Clarissa is thus caught between a commercialized attitude towards marriage and an authoritarian family structure—both characteristically middle-class—and a set of Cavalier attitudes antipathetic to women and marriage. Both family and Lovelace believe that Clarissa, in fleeing the family and then in resisting Lovelace's advances, is indulging personal inclinations, acting a coy, prudish game. For, though in a position of social vulnerability—unchaperoned in Lovelace's various domiciles—she will not marry him except under scrupulous conditions, which include reunion with the family she has fled. All this looks impractical, if not ridiculous, and it can only be, everyone supposes, that Clarissa is simply playing some devious game.

What Richardson has done is to point out the paradoxical harmony of the attitudes of Puritan and Cavalier towards women. Though otherwise opposed, both traditions reflect the Christian myth that man's woes began with woman. That Eve, in the seduction in Paradise, led Adam from innocence to lust, from happiness into a world of woe. Their view is that woman is lustful—the flesh which contaminates the spirit—that she is deceitful, selfish, constantly failing in her God-defined duty to be obedient to her husband, who in the nature of things is her superior, closer to God in knowledge, wisdom, and practical affairs.

The most strenuous versions of this myth come from the early Church fathers, whose view was that only marriage can somewhat alleviate the unfortunate lapses of man into the flesh. Man should be celibate, but unfortunately isn't. Therefore, let him marry. It is better to marry than to burn—though just barely so. Thus the Roman Catholic position, which is only a more extreme version of the Protestant-Calvinist wing of the male party. (I ignore the cult of the Holy Virgin in Roman Catholicism, which tends to work the other direction.)



There is, however, another and contradictory attitude contained in the Protestant-Puritan tradition that we have already observed in Moll Flander's world. Puritanism, in its revolutionary reaction to Roman Catholicism, ultimately elevates the individual to supreme importance, above clan, family or institution. Woman is depraved, yes; she is man's inferior, yes! But, on the other hand, she is equal to man in the sight of God, and to attain salvation she may deny family or mate. For her ultimate duty is to God alone, not to husband, father, uncles or cousins. (We are back with Bunyan's archetypal solitary figure again.) It is this little flaw, this crack in the porcelain surface of Puritan doctrine that Samuel Richardson—together by accident at the outset, I think—gets his lever into, within the context of his novel. As we read volume after volume in the fictional correspondences of the novel's *personae*, it becomes slowly clear that Clarissa is, indeed, motivated by an ideal of the supremacy of the individual spirit over the secular needs of clan. The family is right about Clarissa's rebellious tendencies, but totally wrong about the deepest motives. Her standards of action are private, interior, and spiritual; not social, public and worldly. What her family and Lovelace regard as being, in her weak social position, excessive attention to physical chastity and social reputation is, as Richardson steadily elaborates the struggle, clearly a symbol of Clarissa's inner virtue. We may pause to contrast her with Moll Flanders, who would naturally not understand any of this talk about higher values, and probably pick Clarissa's pocket. "Delicacy" for Clarissa is not a social tool by which to triumph over men in the unequal sexual war, but an outward expression of an inward grace. This is not at all understood by either the greedy family or by Lovelace—a run-down post-Renaissance courtier to whom social gracefulness long ago ceased to signify symbolically a spiritual grace.

If we think about all this for a moment, the novel suggests a parallel to—though not an identity with—the high Renaissance idealism of a work like the puritan John Milton's masque of *Comus*—in which the solitary maiden, symbolic of Platonic virtue, is threatened by a masked magician-rake and his route of villanous sensualists as she seeks her family (father and brothers). Clarissa appears to *her family* to be a type of the prodigal child, who in this realistic parable regrettably is stubbornly unwilling to return to her family on their terms of *ersatz*-charity, and so must go it alone with the swine. But on a higher level there is evidently *to us* a different pattern—the testing pattern in which the Christian soul, lost alone in the wilderness and beset by obstacles and enticements, seeks its true spiritual home.

To suggest that Richardson—consciously or sub-consciously—has allowed his novel to hint at a metaphysical drama taking place high above the level of its social drama is feasible, if we think of the ways in which Puritans see the world allegorically (as matter masking spirit) and typologically (as matter manifesting spirit). Clarissa's values, at any rate, clearly lie on a plane above the market place, above those of the other *personae* of the novel. And like many a good Platonic maiden or wayfaring Christian, Clarissa mistakenly supposes—tragically in her case—that Lovelace shares her idealism. He looks so charming, and acts so! But in leaving her family for him she has gone from frying pan to fire, for he turns out to be not the Platonic lover, but a sadistic, satanic-like oppressor. As she will not bend to his enticements or threats, he must finally rape her—a sign of his frustrated will. Now, however, by this act added to all the other external, visible standards of polite society, the prodigal, willful and now ruined Clarissa is hopelessly fallen, turned from the dutiful virginal daughter to a fleshly, perverse Eve-creature. In fact, Clarissa's dishonor is only formal and outward, not inward. "Comfort yourself," writes her social friend Miss Howe, "in the triumph of a virtue unsullied, a will wholly faultless." This minority-view opinion, though sounding particularly sententious and clichéd from the pen of pert Miss Howe, is nevertheless accurate, and reflects the principle of a truly aristocratic virtue, superior to all aristocracies of birth or fortune, immune to the slings and arrows of outrageous vulgar life—a condition which all the Miltonic Comuses, or Cavalier Lovelaces, or ignorant money-minded fathers of the world can never understand, or touch, or soil.

If this were all, we should have something like a minor divine comedy, a triumph for Clarissa on the moral scale of life to match Moll Flander's triumph on the economic scale. But unfortunately Clarissa is no Moll Flanders. Richardson is too honest about her condition to rig the consequences, and is writing a realistic novel, not a Renaissance masque or allegory. So there is no happy resolution. For while Clarissa's values lie beyond the market place, Clarissa herself cannot live beyond it. She is a woman set realistically in a social matrix of violently conflicting class and family loyalties and money principles. And Richardson lets the logic of events take its course. So we see that the Puritan "ideal" of the supreme importance of the individual's worth, in humane and spiritual terms, has failed Clarissa as a viable code of social conduct, when it runs up against the middle-class (and Puritan) reality of a "laissez-faire," economic-oriented society. Whereas Moll Flander's values are identical with those who dominate the society, Clarissa's are not; and she has not Moll's prudential wisdom. Society's values are too strong for Clarissa. Although she is still pure within, her social reputation is ruined beyond repair. She is a soiled bit of dry goods with no market value. She cannot live in this society. Inexorable logic tells us she must die.

It is in Clarissa's death that Richardson illuminates brilliantly the conflict of higher and lower values. For Clarissa's death is merely curious, pathetic and sentimental on the lower level of manners and social concerns. Clarissa comes to terms with her condition (quarts of tears), forgives her friends their weaknesses and her enemies their sins (gallons of tears), surrounds herself with a crowd of worshipping death-bed admirers (barrels of tears), and finally—dressed for her coffin in garments and Richardsonian language suggestive that she is to become the bride of Christ—she takes leave of this world, knowing that she will be recompensed in the next. The hand of Divine Justice—it is called "poetic justice" in sentimental, melodramatic literature—strikes: the cruel family withers; the lover-rake dies in a duel, bitterly repentant for his deeds; and everybody takes home a morsel of the morality cake that Richardson has baked. And yet, beyond the pious wailing on this level of reading, one catches a murmur of a larger pattern of meaning—a sense of the release upward of the human spirit, a catching up of the soul in its flight to freedom, a confirmation of the fundamental values of human dignity—raised to spiritual levels and purged of the grosser elements of the Puritan paradox. I can only suggest to you that this meaning exists in the reiterated imagery suggestive of religious symbolism and in the language associated with metaphysical drama. But it is there in the mass of the novel, in the total symbolic construct of action, gesture and speech.

Clarissa's inner values are not, let us again be clear, merely "too fine" for this world. Richardson may have been an effete intellectual snob, but his vision is not. The defeat of her values and her death constitute a profound criticism of the commercialized, double-standard, male-female role structure of society. That part of the Puritan tradition which recognizes the equality of woman under God is insufficient to stand up against the other and more ancient side of the tradition which, linked to commercial attitudes and interests, beats woman down into an object of trade and a shattered heart.

I should like, in the last few minutes, to bring us back to a summary comparison, and to suggest, first, in terms of archetypal patterns which Defoe and Richardson articulate in their novels, what conclusions we can draw. In Defoe's novel we can see reflected, early in the 18th century, the need of the emergent middle-class to justify within the context of its religious beliefs the economic route upward through the existing societal structure to new positions of power, responsibility and respectability. What the middle-class merchant needed was a sanction for his economic activity to make it socially acceptable. And whatever historians may say about the historical relationship of capitalism to Puritanism, the fact is that Defoe in his novel, like many other Puritan-raised or Puritan-oriented writers of his time—Richard Steele, Joseph Addison, George Lillo—provides through the metaphor of religious belief and values brought over to secular activity, that needed underpinning for the market

activity. Defoe sought in the interaction of Puritan archetype and secular story to harmonize the strains of Puritan and middle-class impulses and attitude. His ultimate effort in such a work as *Moll Flanders* is to justify the economic ways of men (and women) to God.

In *Clarissa* Samuel Richardson set out, I believe, to justify the religiously defined and traditional function of woman in the patriarchal family as one of obedience to man and duty to father. He set out to oppose this Puritan concept of subordination and pious duty to the Cavalier, anti-Puritan aristocratic code which stands for sensual license and contempt for family and marriage. Along the way a funny thing happened to him; he discovered the greater Puritan value of individual freedom. And to this higher ideal he responded instinctively, truly and finely, investing *Clarissa's* domestic and sentimental tale of woe with the language suggestive of the martyred saint, of the solitary Christian's journey from her worldly home and temporal ties of kin to her true celestial home and the eternal approbation of her true, Heavenly Father. He made of her a spiritual individualist, equal to man under the eternal eyes of God.

And what, finally, does all this mean down on the ordinary level of real life, where men and women must toil daily with the problems of hunger and loneliness, of despair and oppression, of the need for mutual affection and trust despite the hindrances of institutions and traditions? It is to Defoe's credit that he saw clearly women as the equal of men in talent, industry and intellect, that he saw their socio-economic oppression exactly for what it was—*oppression*—and that he saw—given a chance to perform on equal terms with men—that women could make their own and equal way. Since the cash-nexus is everything, however, his advice to women is to grab and hold for themselves, to never confuse love with security, or affection with freedom. A divisive and cynical advice, perhaps, but understandable in the circumstances.

It is to Richardson's greater credit, I believe, that he did not fall into an equivalent social cynicism about the sexual war, bad as it was (and is), or fall, either, into pious moralizing for the status quo, once he discovered what that was. Setting out to defend the Puritans against the Cavaliers, he discovered that in their views of women both were wrong, that both traditions degraded women in different ways, and that in doing so degrade us all. This last point is the unavoidable meaning of the novel's close, where the consequences of the multiple violations of *Clarissa's* individual human rights and dignity reverberate through society, bringing down family, foe and all. It is not the insolence of Cavalier alone, nor the greed of family, but the entire social structure—including the uncommitted, hesitant fair-weather friends—that is indicted in *Clarissa's* fall and death, and from which Richardson releases her in a tragically transcendental, suggestively mystical gesture which is itself, again, an indictment of the society.

Richardson saw, like Defoe, the cash-nexus as the central tyrannical force of society. But Defoe's advice to women to compete, to grasp, while it may be prudent advice, does not slay the beast, and leaves the society in equal but separate condition, still divided—still without community. Defoe's archetype remains, then, the solitary figure, turned away from house and human kindred, oriented to "I."

Richardson's tragic vision is ultimately wiser, more profound: his book reveals at its heart that there are no winners, only losers, in such a divisive sexual war—no triumph for either woman or man where money determines all values and no sense of human community is possible. *Clarissa's* release from the society is a sign of its lack of, and need for, harmony, mutuality and love between men and women. Richardson's ideal is, finally, that of Milton's *Comus*, of the daughter restored in mutual affection to father and family, or of a finer version of the two-figure archetype of Adam and Eve. And so, to the query of the ragged figure, "What shall I do?", it is Richardson's, not Defoe's, response that has most value for us. It is by Richardson's response, turning the solitary figure back to house and kindred, rephrasing the question as "What shall *We* do?", that men and women of our time must seek the way to moral equity and social concord.



## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Readers may note that a part of my title is borrowed from a now almost forgotten but at one time (almost) shocking little work by Ms. Helen Gurley Brown. I have also borrowed much (not specifically documented) from *The Second Sex*, and from the following historical and literary studies: Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (New York, 1952); Maximillian Novak, *Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe* (Berkeley, 1962); H. M. Robertson, *Aspects of the Rise of Economic Individualism* (Cambridge, England, 1935); Tawney's *Religion and the Rise of Capitalism* (London, 1926); Max Weber, *Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism* (London, 1930); J. Paul Hunter, *The Reluctant Pilgrim* (Philadelphia, 1966); G. A. Starr, *Defoe and Spiritual Autobiography* (Princeton, 1965); Dorothy Van Ghent, *The English Novel* (New York, 1953); Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel* (Berkeley, 1959). No doubt I have stolen from other items too for which I would do public penance here if—like one of my literary heroines, Moll—I could but remember the crime!

<sup>2</sup> Though fiction—literary art—was considered blasphemous by the Puritans—perverted verbal iconography—it could be justified to the degree that the individual story presented the type, the secular details manifesting the spiritual realities of another Christian Everyman progressing to the Bosom of Abraham. Thus, whether historical or contemporary, fictional or factual, saintly or sinnerly, there will be meaning in each life. Thus, again, is fiction, like biography (e. g., “personal history”) wedded to typology and God's Design.



ON: EATING THE APPLE; SIPPIN' THE CIDER;  
SPITTING OUT THE SEEDS; CANNING APPLESAUCE—  
BUT NOT ON: BAKING APPLE PIES!

by  
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Let me begin this discussion with you by trying to make clear what my intent is and what methods or style I shall use to attempt to do this. First of all, I would like to borrow a phrase from Mary Daly's book, *Beyond God the Father: Towards A Philosophy of Women's Liberation*. The phrase is "exorcising the evil." As you have undoubtedly guessed, I shall be working on the image of the apple, or the myth of feminine evil as it has been interpreted in the Judeo-Christian tradition and as it has permeated my own individual consciousness or myth. "Exorcising" in the sense of making this myth mine, rather than making me fit the myth, and "exorcising" in the sense of freeing us in the cultural setting to at least see the power of the image, and perhaps to resist it if we so choose.

I shall also want to use some of the kind of methodology of knowing mythologically which Elizabeth Sewall spoke of. She used the phrase "co-inherence of images" which she has found in Frances Yates and in Giordano Bruno, and which I have encountered most fully in the writings of Charles Williams. In either case, it is a way of knowing which discovers meaning, not in linear or logical thought patterns, but rather in piling one kind of symbolic meaning on top of another until there is almost a new reality living in or emanating from the original symbol and thus from all of the images incorporated in the process. I think this is also akin to what Ann Ulanov, the Jungian theologian, calls feminine consciousness.

Another facet of the way in which I shall endeavor to discuss this image of the apple comes from my academic orientation as well as from my other employed working experiences. Every so often you as a person, student, or worker have to stop everything and report on where you are. This is not just to function as a kind of evaluation, it is a device to make each of us take our work seriously. I am using this lecture as such an occasion personally and communally.

Only one other comment seems called for before I start talking on apples with you. In some significant way I would like not to have to take myth so seriously. I would like to be a bit more distant from the whirling mythic symbols and images which flood my mind in waking and sleeping. But, alas, I come to you in the tradition of beasts, both "southern" and "Alaskan," "unicorns which trouble the sleep," and "terrorizing mountains." It is also important for me to say that I am a very social person who is constantly confronting myths at work in the way I relate to other people, in the way they relate to me, and in every dimension of human endeavor and culture. Because I do not subscribe to all of these myths does not mean that they have no impact upon me. Rather it seems to me that there is a kind of constant struggle to sort out who I am in the midst of all of these social and personal myths. This lecture then will attempt to look at the social dimensions of the myth of woman as evil as I personally grapple to define myself.

Now to apples!

*On Eating the Apple:* Way back long ago, in the land of mythological meanings, Eve, the first woman, took a large bite of an apple. Let us hope that it was a winesap, or perhaps your preference would be a golden delicious. At any rate, let us hope that she enjoyed it so that all of the consequences which came forth from this one act can at least have started with pleasure and fulfillment rather than a sour, pithy, wormy mouthfull. Certainly sourness and worms followed upon the act. Let us remember that this was not

just any apple: it was disobedience to God; it was seeking knowledge; and it was taking on the dare of the serpent. One has to see that it was an evil act and it was followed by another evil act. Eve persuaded Adam, the first man, to eat of this apple and together they had to move into a new world, a whole new reality—they had to leave Paradise.

On a more serious vein, I accept this story of creation found in Genesis as a fairly good attempt to try to portray the beginnings of good and evil in the human experience. In the myth of Adam and Eve the human exercise of freedom to know and desire to shape their own future, even if it were better shaped for them by an all knowing God, rings true to my understanding of what it is like to be alive and human. I am not, I hope you realize, denying that Eve ate the apple or that in so doing the possibility of living in an ordered paradise of all-knowing care was destroyed.

I was pleased to find a necklace of an apple, and more precisely of an apple eaten, because I want to say that I do not resist the idea that Eve and other women, myself included, are evil. One of the major points I want to make in this lecture is that evil is a major part of the human experience and women participate in it as much as men. So what is it that I want to say about the Genesis story? I have said that it is a fairly good story. What I would have changed about it, if I had written it, or even just told it in the oral tradition, is that Adam and Eve were each tempted to eat apples and that they did separately and autonomously. I say this for two reasons. One, the whole long history of the harassment or at least the subordination of women because Eve was the most sinful of the two, is to me a tragic consequence. I know that the story just reflected a bias against women which was present in the society of that time, but I am appalled that this symbolic story and this prejudice and bias still permeate our culture. The power of the repeated story can only be seen here as amazingly profound and in some ways terrifying. The second reason I wish the story were expressed in another way is that it reflects what to me is a very sorry picture of Adam and thusly, a very poor picture of maleness. I find the whole notion of Eve as the seducer of Adam, poor and defenseless Adam, at that, to be silly at one level and very sad at another. Women as the scapegoat, the fault of man's undoing, persists in subtle ways. It clearly is not a pleasant phenomenon for women, but is also a most childish and unappealing portrayal of maleness. If women must accept responsibility for evil, and I think we must, then so must man. Really, the acceptance of the responsibility for one's freedom, whether it is beneficial or corrupting, seems to me to be central to becoming responsible persons, and I am appalled that men have found justification and self-acceptance by use of scapegoatism. This is not merely the problem of the actions or attitudes of individual nasty men here and there; it is basic to the institutional patterns of our culture and it has its devastating effect on men and women.

The whole syndrome of women as inferior, unequal, less able, less important, subordinate, finds, if not its rationale in this notion of women as the most evil, then at least its rhetoric in every century. Now we see it in unequal pay for the same work; earlier periods have seen it in the idea of motherhood as the "curse" for this evil seduction, or in the education of men but not women, or in the lack of political rights for women, or in the centuries-long refusal to allow women to fulfill major religious and cultural leadership. Truly, it seems impossible to believe that this one simple story can possibly have been quoted and believed so many times in so many different ways to justify such views.

In closing this section on eating apples, I would say that the enormousness of the power of evil, explicitly and implicitly in our lives, must be faced, must be accepted, and then, only then, is there some possible way for us to avoid perpetuating some of it in ourselves and in others. G. K. Chesterton has been most significant to me here in the figure of his detective fiction character, Father Brown. This quiet Catholic priest is able to solve the mystery because he knows that he could, in fact, do any evil act. Thus, he can perceive the crim-

inal by systematically personifying and empathizing with all of the people involved. If you and I are to attempt to avoid evil by running from it, or pretending that the possibility does not exist within us, we shall simply not succeed; we shall merely perpetuate it in our very escape.

But let's backtrack for just a moment here. All this talk of evil and thus implicitly of good—clearly this is the major point of the story of the eating of the apple, and yet what was actually involved, besides just eating the fruit, was the search for knowledge and expression of a God-given freedom. Are knowledge and freedom then to be equated with evil? I personally would have to answer that the potentiality for both evil and goodness resides in freedom and knowledge and in us—in the human condition. But a specific kind of knowing is also incorporated into the Genesis myth—that of knowing one another sexually. The myth labels this evil. Again I would say the potential for both goodness and evil is incorporated into sexuality but in talking about “sippin’ the cider,” I would like to move to another religious myth or image which develops and contradicts the notion of sex as evil, which has strangely altered the whole attitude of woman as evil.

*Sippin’ the Cider:* This image is of the Church as the Bride of Christ and it comes in a mythic form, the dream of John in the Book of Revelation. In this dream, the kingdom of God, the Paradise regained, is portrayed as a marriage between Christ, the sacrificial lamb, and the bride who is feminine in nature and here personified as a radiant and holy new Jerusalem—a new city shining in purity and adorned with gold and silver and jewels. The Bride comes forth to share the marriage feast with the slain lamb—the bridegroom—Christ. Now the Book of Revelation was written during the struggle of early Christians who were faced with persecution and death; it stresses those aspects of the Christian faith which urge its followers to respond immediately to the love of Christ and to be always ready to be joined with him through death. This same kind of emphasis on the ever readiness of the Christian to be open to re-entry into the Kingdom of God or into Paradise can be found through the parables of Jesus.

For our purposes, we shall look at this phenomenon of being ready to respond to the love of Christ, and thus to enter into Paradise, as it is found in the parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins. In this parable, a group of women are invited to a marriage feast. The clear understanding is that they must be ready to come exactly at the appointed but unknown time. When the doors of the feast close behind the bridegroom, those who are not ready are closed out forever. Now I would agree with those who say that this choosing to be ready is in response to an invitation which is not of their own making, but I would stress here that I do not see this as a passive response. Rather, it is a significant action on the part of those who are ready to respond to this invitation. I think if one sees this response as being merely a passive form of complying without freedom, the drama of the Christian story and struggle is lost. There is rather in this parable, I would contend, the clear notion that all were invited but only some chose to exercise their freedom to rejoin paradise. This is not just obedience; this is seen as an exercise of freedom and it is seen as good—that is, it is in direct contradiction to the Genesis story where the exercise of freedom is seen as wrong. At any rate, in the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, some women put in oil ahead of time and they fill their lamps so that they can be ready even during the night, should the feast start then. The feast does start at night and only those who are ready to act make it to the feast on time. The feast is the marriage of Christ to the faithful—to the Bride.

Now you may well be saying, isn't that interesting? Perhaps you know the image but I would suspect that many of you do not. Certainly it is not as dominant a theme as the Fall of Adam and Eve. And even if it were, what does it say about either sex or the image of woman? Let me say that many Christian writers and interpreters have simply ignored this whole notion. They have placed the stress, not on the active response of the Christian, but rather on the deprived nature of the person who is almost overwhelmed by the power of God to choose and claim him or her. The placing of the stress on the freedom of response has, however, been



one of the ways to interpret this struggle or story throughout Christendom. It is part of the "Way of Affirmation," images change persons' lives, as opposed to the "Way of Negation," where images lack such power. Those Christians who have stressed the more positive approach to this question have very often used this image or myth of the Bride of Christ and in fact have developed what is called "romantic theology." Most clearly this image is also a major symbol in the mystical tradition and it influenced the interest in romance during the Middle Ages. Even though it is almost blotted out in mainline Protestantism, remnants of it persist even there. Examples might be hymns such as "The Church's One Foundation" and, in more evangelical forms, "In the Garden."

This mythic image of the bride has affected the notion of sexuality in two ways. I would remind those of you who read Herb Richardson's book, *Nun, Witch and Playmate*, or heard him speak last year on the nature of sexuality in different historical periods, that he argues that the ideas of sexuality as sinful, which developed into the idea of voluntary celibacy in the early church and in the Middle Ages, does in fact bring about a most important shift in the perspective of consciousness about sexuality. Up until that time, sexuality, even though it was viewed as evil, was essential to life. One did not really have the alternative to choose, to control, to express or repress, or to rechannel one's sexual energy. One just had it. It was inevitable. Celibacy was a negative way of gaining a freedom of choice. It is thus interesting to note that when women chose a life of celibacy, they did it with the church's sanction by becoming the mystical bride of Christ. In fact, a type of marriage service was performed between the Nun and Christ. Now here the images of sexuality still persist as evil, but the option of making free choice to exercise one's sexuality becomes possible. And because women were able, in fact, to "marry" Christ, the image of women was enhanced. No longer must all women suffer the curse of childbirth assigned to Eve as a result of her actions.

However, celibacy was not seen as the only way to be a Christian. Obviously, if Christianity was to persist, some people were going to have to marry and have children. Thus we begin to find the church blessing marriages, and much later actually performing a religious service to enhance marriage and sex as a good thing. Now Jesus did not marry and thus there was no clear ritual which could be used to symbolize the approval of the church of marriage; so one had to develop. The marriage service which we know is of relatively late origin in the Christian church. When it was developed, it used two distinct and contradictory perspectives about women and about men. On the one hand, in the language of the service, the inferiority and submission of the bride is picked up from St. Paul; the cultural notions of woman as property to be passed from father to husband are incorporated; and the clear notion of woman as worthy only because of her relationship to man is stressed. In spite of these negative perceptions the blessing of sexuality in marriage is stressed. On the other hand, when the ritual (the actual movement of people in symbolic gestures) was designed, the image used was that of the Bride of Christ and the volitional action of the wise virgins. A radiant, worthy, adorned bride comes from outside of the Church and processes in majesty to the altar—the symbol of paradise within the Church. There she is met by the groom, who like the Christ he is portraying, comes from within the Church—within paradise. They exchange vows of fidelity to each other, and in those traditions which allow for individual partaking of the mass or the communion, they participate in this symbol of the marriage feast—just the two of them—not even the priest or the clergy. Paradise has been dramatically re-entered by male and female. They leave the church together; that is, they leave Paradise—but this leaving has now been blessed, called good.

I also want you to see another change in the idea of good and evil. In the Genesis story, the female figure becomes the scapegoat for evil. In this version, the Christ-figure, the slain lamb, has become the scapegoat—has taken unto himself the responsibility for evil, thus relieving the female of this curse. The female is por-



trayed as both Eve (by coming from outside of Paradise) and the bride that is worthy. The groom is the "New Adam."

Now I know you are skeptical about all of this. Certainly no woman that you know has all this figured out in her mind when she puts on radiant white, with pennies in her shoe, etc. I would agree. But I would contend that the very fact of having a marriage service in which the message comes not from the words but from the ritual—the medium is the message—means that women have come to find themselves symbolically relieved of the onus of the figure of Eve. That is, in moving through this ritual or watching other women move through it, the female image is enhanced and called good. It is a social dynamic which has a public and a "secret" message. And some women have known the "secret." For those women who perceived this about themselves—who were ready to accept the notion of themselves as evil—but also as worthy—these women have found in this double use of this ritualized myth, the mythic power to affirm those parts of the New Testament's message about women which are positive instead of seeing themselves as inferior, submissive, and in some ways only justified by men.

Let me add just one personal note to this. The marriage service has functioned thusly for me. However, in some significant way I am grateful that Quakers, who have had a more positive image of women, have not had to use this form, and that men and women today who have more outward ways of expressing the worth of women can choose to avoid the patriarchal baggage and language of this service. Yet I still marvel that the power of this "secret" myth has been so strong and so pervasive for many women. I would also like to add that in my own experience of knowing sexually, what I have called "sippin' the cider" (that is, taking in the essence of the apple, taking a lover), or in yet other words, falling in love with John—the response to his love, the decision to be the beloved, as well as the lover, was very much an active affirmation. It was an affirmation of a sense of worth in myself and in no way should be seen as a passive response or justification. I would, however, say that I am enough a part of the cultural story which stresses the idea of my inferiority, or unworthiness, that this decision to be the be-loved (in contrast, being a lover is relatively easy) was truly one of the hardest decisions I have ever made.

*Spitting Out the Seeds:* Let us turn now to other images of the apple—images of woman. Let us move back away from the liquid essence of the apple, the cider which is clearly intoxicating even if it is not fermented, to the whole apple again. I would ask you to take a juicy apple and bite into it. Relish its taste and enjoy its juices, but wait! I have bitten into the very core of the apple and here in my mouth is hard core and hard seed. Clearly, let us hope that we have done this in the out-of-doors so that we can forcefully spit out the seed rather than daintily slip it out of the mouth onto the edge of the plate.

I want to speak very quickly about spitting out the seeds in five different ways. First of all, I want to refer back to the process which we have just come through. What we have been doing is exploring several myths about apples; I have affirmed some parts of them as being akin to my experience and I have also implicitly been denying other parts of the myth to have any power over me. I have been assuming power to control the meaning and interpretation of myth rather than trying to fit myself to the myth. Let me just say, in reporting about myself, and I might add about many other women who are involved either in consciousness raising or in women's studies or just in affirming their own experience as women and as people of worth, that I am very much in the process of being empowered by some myths and of spitting out the rest. You may think this is unfair to myth. I would say that the history of ideas, which is primarily a history of men's ideas, is simply a history of precisely this kind of venture, and I want to say that more and more women are taking this process upon themselves. Let me just add that I also know from the history of ideas and the social realities which flow from or at least alongside of them, that this can be a dangerous process. But I am involved

at any rate, because not to be involved, to simply take the interpretation of myth from others, has proved dangerous as well. The social realities built on these myths surround you and me at every turn and to ignore them is to be controlled by them.

Let us turn now to a second kind of spitting out the seeds. Seeds of the apple are not just a nuisance, they are the way that apples come about. They are the carriers of fertility—the means of reproducing. As a woman (equally true of men, don't forget) I am reminded about every 28 days that I am the creator of seeds. That is, in menstruation, I am constantly spitting out seeds. There is certainly great power in this as we all, male or female, perceive about ourselves at puberty. Like any power, I would remind you that I think it has potential for good and evil. But this fall, I have been looking very carefully at those myths of earlier periods in the Middle East which have stressed the power of the female as the creator and sustainer of seeds—that is, I have been looking at the myths of the Great Mother, the *Magna Mater*, the Great Goddess.

Now I mentioned just a few minutes ago that women are actively looking through the mythic tradition to see whether there are not myths which relate more closely to our own experience and thus which we can affirm. Some women engaged in this process have turned to the myths of the Great Mother as the final answer for a mythic justification of the female. My reaction to these myths was very different. It can best be symbolized by this round device to dispense birth control pills. It goes around and around endlessly, it seems like a tread mill. The ancient effort to capture the power of fertility in the pattern of a three-stage female fertility symbol—which moves from an adolescent nymph, to a nubile or productive mother, to a rejected and avengeful crone (even when seen in their best lights as muses, good mothers, and wise old women) and returns to start again and again and again—seems to me in its persistence to be bound by a cyclical pattern which simply does not allow for the exercise of individual freedom.

Suddenly, I was even thankful for the idea of a male God outside the natural cycle and transcending space and time. This breaks the enclosed and futile pattern of simply reproducing and maintaining life. I was glad that “history” started, and even that notions of progress developed. I was glad that individuality can come forth even if it produces myths such as Pandora's Box and the myth of the Fall of Adam and Eve. Human beings are not just seed-producing creatures in this very limited way. I have just said above that I am glad to be involved in the creation of myths, symbols, and ideas which may be dangerous but at least counteract the idea that I am only a sexual being. So what am I saying here? I am saying that I am pleased to have the potential to be a fertile sexual being, but don't define me just as that. For centuries, we have persisted in seeing the female as closer to nature because our bodies are more obviously involved in the process of spitting out seeds and developing them for longer periods. In earlier days, the female alone seemed to hold this power. But a change occurred and paternity came to be understood. With this new understanding, female deities were eclipsed by male deities. However, when men found this out about themselves, they started to strut around, pretending, in spite of their new knowledge, that they really were above all of that kind of thing, and that really women were the more natural—the most sexual—and thus less worthy for other pursuits. Our sexuality does manifest to us that we are part of nature, but it should not be the only determinative definition for any of us. It is a potential; it is not the complete essence.

The third image of spitting out seeds does, however, come from my own experience of being the “spitter out of a fertilized seed”—that is, the giver of birth or the mother of a child. The most powerful emotions which surrounded this very mysterious process were amazement, joy, and fear. There was the unbelievable joy of being the passageway through which new life came. It was awesome to me as it was equally awesome to John. But there was also for both of us the realization that we had brought forth life which would have

to die. Many of you have learned from, and have, I suspect, been amused by, Cyril Harvey's observation in a lecture in historical geology that with sex (that is with the development of a higher form of life which could not reproduce alone) also came death. It was a profoundly moving experience to both John and me to give birth to Stephen whom we know will have to die. It is one thing to attempt to make some sense or to cry out in quiet desperation about one's own death. It is profoundly different to be responsible for the life of another who must face this enigma himself. It has also been profoundly moving to have taken on in two different ways (John, the basic economic, and I, the more physical and psychological) responsibility for the sustenance of this life. It was very interesting to me that when a faculty group met this fall to talk about images of women in reference to birth and rebirth, one of the subjects which came up over and over again in our sharing of our own experiences was the correlation between birth and death in our minds. The potential of a more immediate, but the realization of hopefully a more distant, death for this new life hovers ever amid the joy and exaltation at birth. I find very few mythic statements which really capture this for me—that is, capture the parental anguish of their children's death. The figure of the Virgin Mary at the cross of Christ captures some of this but very often, as in the famous Michaelangelo's *Pieta*, the power is lost in a rather passive and insipid lack of feeling. This is not true of his much later sculpture of the Deposition of the Cross in which Mary the Mother and John (with Michelangelo's own face) are bowed down by the weight of the body of Christ and real agony. This sculpture is in the Duomo in Florence and it is the only piece of sculpture which has led me to worship. The concept of a loving God whose son is slain would from my perspective bring clearly to the fore the image of a suffering parent at the death of a child, but theologians have somehow believed that the idea of God's suffering would weaken the idea of an all powerful God and thus *Patricianism*, the theory which would express this and be a very meaningful symbol to me, has been called heresy. Rather, I find this symbol in the life stories of women who have borne children only to bury more than they raise. Here the human story has surpassed the mythic image in speaking to me a very important truth.

Let me turn now to another aspect of this spitting out of seeds—that is, giving birth to children. For many people the image of the Virgin Mother of Christ has acted as an important symbol in many ways, even though it seems to imply a very negative image of sexuality. I agree with Mary Daly that for many women the whole notion of immaculate conception is just so much theological baggage that has been looked at and discarded as irrelevant, and that, in fact, the real message for women has been that having children is an important and even sanctifying experience. I am personally very leery of the idea that salvation comes to a woman as either a wife or a mother, but I would agree that the image of Mary has been seen by many women as a symbol or image of worthiness. Men also have found this to be a powerful image to express an important part of their own experience. And certainly the figure of Mary has spoken to the artist for centuries.

I would like to quickly outline one way in which I think this image has been very positive and one in which it has been destructive. I shall start with the negative way first. Those men and women who have turned to the image of Mary as an image of the sanctification of women have been trapped into two problems. First, I think they have done what I have spoken of before as defining women simply, or at least fundamentally, as biological creatures. The giving birth to, nursing, and caring for children is all seen as very natural; the next step in this interpretation is to see that "natural" is especially good *but* is also limiting. In order to do this, women must be protected, must be cared for and isolated from the rough-and-tumble of everyday life. If women in fact fulfill this function of being natural and of being separated from the evil of the world, they become, strangely, the most moral—the best. All goodness resides in them. They are, in fact, even able to comfort the children and men who are torn up by the "evil" outside world precisely because they are not



contaminated by it. I would agree that this is a most comforting idea. But comfortable is not real. Women become in this way of thinking the most pure and the most irrelevant creatures. This seems to me the prevailing attitude about the American love for "Motherhood." Everyone needs someone who is pure, loving, accepting, self-sacrificing, "natural." Everyone needs a special haven away from the evilness of the world.

In John's myth lecture, he spoke about the presence of the idea of paradise in the civil religion of America. But he also pointed out that the idea is not something that has, in fact, come about; rather, it is an ideal towards which we move, that is, in our pious moments. During the rest of the time we know it is really just a dream that some people should keep alive, but that is really most impractical for real living. However, I would contend that even those who believe it is impractical as a guide for corporate living have decided that they will personally have their own private paradise and that this shall be the home. Clearly the woman who maintains that paradise must be pure, must be all-giving, but remember she must also be protected. This then becomes the rationale for all kinds of indulgence in less moral conduct by males who must support this protected home. All kinds of things can be done in order to ensure this haven, or heaven, on earth. We have thus developed a lovely double standard of morality all in the name of protecting the moral female.

I find this unacceptable for two major reasons. First, women do not need that kind of protection unless society forces them into a dependent mold. Secondly, I simply do not believe that a society should function indefinitely with various and contradictory standards of morality. If we cannot live up to what we espouse as the most pure morality, then let us find a standard that we can all accept. Let us stop making women the scapegoat, here not because she is more evil, but because she is more natural and thus dependent, and thus the most moral. The myth of women in Paradise, either Eve in the garden or "Motherhood" at home, is simply not a constructive myth for women. In both cases the myth is used to keep women from fully participating in the larger culture. And in both cases women are the basis for a false morality. However, I would contend that the whole society suffers as well. As women have learned how to be nurturing and life-sustaining in motherhood, they could bring these learnings to the society. But now the society sees these learnings as irrelevant. As long as this continues, the dominant energies of the society will not see the importance of everyone in the society learning to be nurturing and life-sustaining.

Besides all of this, it is nowhere a part of my experience that women are by nature more moral or more pure than men. It is as absurd an idea as that one which says that women are less moral, more evil than men.

Let me just briefly mention, however, one way in which the image of the Virgin Mary can be interpreted which speaks to a different image of women. Beatrice Bruteau of Winston-Salem has written an article in which she points out that the idea of Mary as virgin and as mother (most assuredly a paradox, if not a contradiction) can and, in fact, does act as a symbol of the relationship of the one to the many. As a virgin, the stress is placed on the idea that there was worth in Mary in and of herself. She is not dependent upon her relationship with God or man for her justification. She is here seen as an autonomous self—a separate entity—and a good one at that. However, as a mother, both while pregnant and after the birth, she is shown in a relationship to other life which is sustaining, nurturing, and absolutely crucial for the continuation of, not only life, but community. Here the emphasis is not just on the woman's ability to relate to others, but equally on her autonomous self—free to develop in other ways. I find this a very interesting idea. Certainly the value of learning to be nurturing and life-sustaining is an important human learning, one I believe men must cultivate as well, but there is also a need for a symbol which speaks to the experience of women as separate, responsible *act*-ors in our own rights. Perhaps this symbol speaks to this need.

Now lest you despair, I will tell you that there is only one more seed to dispense with and it can go in a hurry. I personally cannot accept the idea that women are justified by being mothers, but neither do I



accept the idea from my more radical sisters, that the potential to be mothers should be downgraded. I share a concern with all of those people who fear that the change of the women's role will in some way destroy the fabric of life. There must be nurturing in the society. There must be a cocoon for the sustaining of life. There must be a concern for the quality of life rather than the exploitation of life. But I would strongly disagree that this can be brought about by a simple return to the hearth by women. Precisely this is how double standards have been justified. This elimination of women from engagement in the world is one of the major devices used to condone activity which is not life sustaining at all. Now let me hurry to say that I do not believe that women have or will automatically change the moral character of life by entering into more of its aspects. But I do believe this change may force all of us to realize that if life is to be developed and sustained, we all must do it together—male and female, all of us in all different ways. This means that we shall have to create institutions which are less exploitive and more supportive and nurturing for all people. I do not know that we shall be able to do this. I am, however, sure that if we do not go through the agony of trying (and that means knowing full well that some of these attempts will be destructive as well as constructive), we are probably headed on a path towards destruction of life. We either have to find a way to affirm life together or else proceed to destroy it systematically.

*Canning Applesauce:* On that bright note I shall leave the seeds, and turn to canning applesauce. When you can applesauce, you take the apple, change its form so that it can be preserved for a later date when apples cannot be had to eat. A way of conserving energy, one might say. Well, what I want to say is that I am involved with many other women and men in the process of saving the mythic energy which affirms life and which affirms freedom, but which acknowledges that good and evil reside together in this venture. I have spoken to you about taking old myths and saving that part of them which has constructive life-giving energy and spitting out the rest. I am also becoming conscious that in certain parts of my experience and the experience of other women, the myths are inadequate. Thus, I am creating a personal myth as many have spoken of in this series before. But I am also trying, with many others to find the way to create new social myths—myths sometimes as story, but also as concrete social realities—that is, groups, institutions, ways of relating which try responsibly to enhance life rather than destroy or damage it. This is what I mean by preserving the apple.

*But Not On: Baking Apple Pies:* I want to be sure you realize that when one starts on the process of creating new myths, new social realities, one necessarily is involved in the process of breaking the power of old myths. I know this is dangerous. I know that as I do it, I am undoubtedly perpetuating destruction and evil as well as goodness. But I know that this is what I have to do if I am to be responsible to my freedom to act. Thus, in conclusion, I shall mention apple pie. Apple pie is like motherhood. It is very comforting and I truly love to bake apple pies and to eat them. But apple pie is just a sugar-coated mythic apple which allows us to be blind to a false ideology of freedom—one in which all evil is washed away in the loving accepting home separated from the world. I will work to break the power of the myth of motherhood and the myth of apple pie even though I long for the simplicity of retreat and comfort which they bring so close. Much as I would like to bury my fears and my weaknesses in maternal or paternal understanding and acceptance, I can no longer do it and be an adult, responsible, human being.

In closing I would say that, yes, an apple is an apple is an apple, but to me it is truly also very much more as well.



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# GUILFORD REVIEW

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# **GUILFORD                      REVIEW**

**MYTH IN MULTIPLE PERSPECTIVE**

**GUILFORD COLLEGE      Greensboro, North Carolina 27410**

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## Editorial for Spring, 1976

### GUILFORD REVIEW

During the school year 1975-76, Guilford College has sponsored a weekly lecture series on myth. Faculty from the humanities and the natural and social sciences explored, through the rich perspective offered by myth, questions of meaning in life and language, truth in knowledge and action, and the place of the self in the social and natural worlds.

As occurred five years ago on the occasion of the first Myth Colloquium, a student asked to lecture out of his own involvement with myth, and so we were pleased to have Wallace Galloway lecturing on his own experiences with Looking Glass Rock sacred to the American Indians in Western North Carolina. It was our pleasure and distinct honor to include within these explorations two guest lecturers who are outstanding in our day in the study of mythology, Elizabeth Sewell and Joseph Campbell. And it is as well a pleasure to present among the papers published this year in the *Guilford Review*, the reflections on Christianity and myth from the point of view of C. S. Lewis by a distinguished member of our country's business community, E. William Nash, Jr., Visiting Fellow under the Business Executive in Residence Program of the Institute of Life Insurance of New York.

The Fall and Spring issues of the *Guilford Review* draw upon lectures given in the Myth Colloquium. While the lectures have been quite diverse, one clear theme emerged among enough lecturers to organize a whole issue around this theme, and so the Fall issue is devoted to "Woman and Mythology." It is hoped this collection will contribute significantly to the already lively interest at Guilford in Woman's Studies. Publishing the other manuscripts received from the Myth lectures, the Spring issue explores "Myth in Multiple Perspective" as it takes up questions of the nature and function of mythic language and thought in relation to the humanities and the social and natural sciences.

Some have been puzzled over a college devoting an entire year's Faculty Colloquium to myth. More have been surprised at the sizeable turnout of both students and faculty from many different disciplines every Wednesday afternoon for an hour and a half. We can only conclude that myth is engaging and enriching the imaginations of many at Guilford committed to interdisciplinary dialogue and the spiritual quest.



**E. William Nash, Jr., Senior Vice President  
Prudential Insurance Company of America**

Photo by Randy Catoe



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**MYTH AND CHRISTIANITY:  
C. S. LEWIS – THE MAN, HIS LIFE, HIS WORDS**

*by*

*E. William Nash, Jr.*

*(Senior Vice President,*

*The Prudential Insurance Company of America)*

I can produce no list of references nor brag of any accomplishments that would qualify me as an expert on Mr. C. S. Lewis. Although I first read one of his works, "The Screwtape Letters," many years ago, it is only within the last three years that I have followed an intense interest in the man and it is solely from the experience this interest has brought me that I now speak. I profess no particular devotion to scholarship, and it is not with the keen eye of a logician that I study him. Rather my fascination is the result of a "mere incident" that occurred during my final undergraduate year which has led me to examine and enjoy the lives and ideas of a number of great people.

In need of an elective to complete the required number of credits, this student of history chose a class in biography given by Dr. Clyde Kilby, Professor of English Literature. Under his guidance, I became enthralled with the process of studying the habits and thoughts of the notable and the famous, and to this day I follow the practice of having at least one outstanding figure under scrutiny at all times. I draw on no particular period or station in life, but simply delight in a succession of diversified personalities chosen merely by chance.

Through the years, I have run the gamut of United States Presidents, from Thomas Jefferson to Harry Truman, delving into their lifestyles, endeavoring to understand the traits and forces that compelled each to his own accomplishments. For a while I focused on the musical genius of Beethoven, and later found the politics and peculiarities of Lenin to be particularly interesting. Theologically, I have studied John Calvin and his *Institutes*, tasted the thought of Kierkegaard and looked at the ideas of Barth, Brunner and Bonhoeffer. In search of a school of psychology to suit my tastes, I went from Jung (a bit heavy) to Eric Fromm (not deep enough) to Paul Tournier (just right). Recently I have read a couple of the latest biographies of Winston Churchill, a modern great, and found the story of a modern Greek, Nikos Kazantzakis, most engrossing. A chance conversation in a Miami hotel room with Dr. Hugh Russell, Professor of Management at Georgia State University, led me to take up C. S. Lewis as my current study.

Thus, a rough outline of 25 years of reading. The point is that I've never had a course in theology or psychology, nor do I recall reading biography until that senior year elective with Dr. Kilby. Mere incident? Mere chance? Mere biography? Indeed!

My outlook is that of a Christian, but outlook is not really the word. Commitment is much more precise. I am impressed with and grateful to C. S. Lewis because, from a similar standpoint, he is able to put together most of the ideas I have come across in my reading. Not with little boxes where it all fits neat and perfect, but also not fuzzy, confused or watered-down. He says it straight, hard and direct . . . but humanly, weaving together joy, pleasure, sex, pain, struggle, heart-ache and death. He wrote novels, criticism and fantasy but it is as a Christian apologist that I find him most fascinating. I will attempt to convey to you this side of Lewis through a series of excerpts taken from works by and about him, a method which will provide you with the fruits of my labors but avoid the intrusion of personal interpretation.

Perhaps the shortest (and best) vignette of his life that I've come across is found in the first two paragraphs

of the preface to "A Mind Awake," an anthology of Lewis by . . . would you believe . . . Mr. Clyde Kilby:

Clive Staples Lewis was born in Belfast on 29 November 1898. Before he was ten his mother had started him in French, Latin and the reading of fiction. After preparatory study in Irish and English schools, he attended Malvern College in England for one year and then studied for Oxford under W. T. Kirkpatrick at Great Bookham in Surrey. By this time—he was sixteen—he had become an inveterate reader, fallen in love with romantic story and northern myth, been engulfed by the haunting mystery of Joy, developed into an habitual walker, learned to revel in the glory of the English countryside and turned atheist. Oddly, however, it was the rigorous dialectic taught by Kirkpatrick, himself an atheist, which in due course brought Lewis to Christianity.

On his nineteenth birthday Lewis, a second Lieutenant in the Somerset Light Infantry, arrived in the front-line trenches of France, where he was wounded in action. Before enlisting he had attended University College, Oxford, and after the war he returned. In 1920 he took a First Honour in Moderations, in 1922 a First in Greats, and in 1923 a First in English, also the Chancellor's Prize for an English Essay. In October 1924 he became a lecturer at University College, and in 1925 took up his work as Fellow at Magdalen. Four years later the most important event of his life occurred. He was converted to Christianity. He remained at Magdalen until 1954 when he was elected to the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance English at Magdalene College, Cambridge, a post he held until a few weeks before his death on 22 November 1963.<sup>1</sup>

Lewis tells of the question that made him embrace Christianity in the following passage:

Not many years ago when I was an atheist, if anyone had asked me, "Why do you not believe in God?" my reply would have run something like this: "Look at the universe we live in. By far the greatest part of it consists of empty space, completely dark and unimaginably cold. The bodies which move in this space are so few and so small in comparison with the space itself that even if every one of them were known to be crowded as full as it could hold with perfectly happy creatures, it would still be difficult to believe that life and happiness were more than a by-product to the power that made the universe.

History is largely a record of crime, war, disease, and terror, with just sufficient happiness interposed to give them, while it lasts, an agonised apprehension of losing it, and, when it is lost, the poignant misery of remembering. Every now and then they improve their condition a little and what we call a civilisation appears. But all civilisations pass away and, even while they remain, inflict peculiar sufferings of their own probably sufficient to outweigh what alleviations they may have brought to the normal pains of man. That our own civilisation has done so, no one will dispute; that it will pass away like all its predecessors is surely probable. Even if it should not, what then? The race is doomed. Every race that comes into being in any part of the universe is doomed; for the universe, they tell us, is running down, and will sometime be a uniform infinity of homogeneous matter at a low temperature. All stories will come to nothing: all life will turn out in the end to have been a transitory and senseless contortion upon the idiotic face of infinite matter. If you ask me to believe that this is the work of a benevolent and omnipotent spirit, I reply that all the evidence points in the opposite direction. Either there is no spirit behind the universe, or else a spirit indifferent to good and evil, or else an evil spirit."

There was one question which I never dreamed of raising. I never noticed that the very strength and facility of the pessimists' case at once poses us a problem. If the universe is

so bad, or even half so bad, how on earth did human beings ever come to attribute it to the activity of a wise and good Creator?<sup>2</sup>

Next, an examination of the Omnipotence of God:

“If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty, He would be able to do what He wished. But the creatures are not happy. Therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.” This is the problem of pain, in its simplest form. The possibility of answering it depends on showing that the terms “good” and “almighty”, and perhaps also the term “happy” are equivocal: for it must be admitted from the outset that if the popular meanings attached to these words are the best, or the only possible, meanings, then the argument is unanswerable. I shall make some comments on the idea of Omnipotence . . .

His Omnipotence means power to do all that is intrinsically possible, not to do the intrinsically impossible. You may attribute miracles to Him, but not nonsense. This is no limit to His power. If you choose to say “God can give a creature free will and at the same time withhold free will from it,” you have not succeeded in saying anything about God: meaningless combinations of words do not suddenly acquire meaning simply because we prefix to them the two other words “God can.” It remains true that all things are possible with God: the intrinsic impossibilities are not things but nonentities. It is no more possible for God than for the weakest of His creatures to carry out both of two mutually exclusive alternatives; not because His power meets an obstacle, but because nonsense remains nonsense even when we talk it about God.<sup>3</sup>

He stated his view of Christian thought thusly:

Christians, then, believe that an evil power has made himself for the present the Prince of this World. And, of course, that raises problems. Is this state of affairs in accordance with God’s will or not? If it is, He is a strange God, you will say: and if it is not, how can anything happen contrary to the will of a being with absolute power?

What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could “be like gods”—could set up on their own as if they had created themselves—be their own masters—invent some sort of happiness outside God, apart from God. And out of that hopeless attempt has come nearly all that we call human history—money, poverty, ambition, war, prostitution, classes, empires, slavery—the long terrible story of man trying to find something other than God which will make him happy.

The reason why it can never succeed is this. God made us: invented us as a man invents an engine. A car is made to run on gasoline, and it would not run properly on anything else. Now God designed the human machine to run on Himself. He Himself is the fuel our spirits were designed to burn, or the food our spirits were designed to feed on. There is no other. That is why it is just no good asking God to make us happy in our own way without bothering about religion. God cannot give us a happiness and peace apart from Himself, because it is not there. There is no such thing.

That is the key to history. Terrific energy is expended—civilisations are built up—excellent institutions devised; but each time something goes wrong. Some fatal flaw always brings the selfish and cruel people to the top and it all slides back into misery and ruin. In fact, the machine conks. It seems to start up all right and runs a few yards, and then it breaks down. They are trying to run it on the wrong juice. That is what Satan has done to us humans.

And what did God do? First of all He left us conscience, the sense of right and wrong:



and all through history there have been people trying (some of them very hard) to obey it. None of them ever quite succeeded. Secondly, He sent the human race what I call good dreams: I mean those queer stories scattered all through the heathen religions about a god who dies and comes to life again and, by his death, has somehow given new life to men. Thirdly, He selected one particular people and spent several centuries hammering into their heads the sort of God He was—that there was only one of Him and that He cared about right conduct. Those people were the Jews, and the Old Testament gives an account of the hammering process.

Then comes the real shock. Among these Jews there suddenly turns up a man who goes about talking as if He was God. He claims to forgive sins. He says He has always existed. He says He is coming to judge the world at the end of time. Now let us get this clear. Among Pantheists, like the Indians, anyone might say that he was a part of God, or one with God: there would be nothing very odd about it. But this man, since He was a Jew, could not mean that kind of God. God, in their language, meant the Being outside the world Who had made it and was infinitely different from anything else. And when you have grasped that, you will see that what this man said was, quite simply, the most shocking thing that has ever been uttered by human lips.<sup>4</sup>

What does Lewis think of the story of Creation? Read on:

I have therefore no difficulty in accepting, say, the view of those scholars who tell us that the account of Creation in Genesis is derived from earlier Semitic stories which were Pagan and mythical. We must of course be quite clear what “derived from” means. Stories do not reproduce their species like mice. They are told by men. Each re-teller either repeats exactly what his predecessor had told him or else changes it. He may change it unknowingly or deliberately. If he changes it deliberately, his invention, his sense of form, his ethics, his ideas of what is fit, or edifying, or merely interesting, all come in. If unknowingly, then his unconscious (which is so largely responsible for our forgettings) has been at work. Thus at every step in what is called—a little misleadingly—the “evolution” story, a man, all he is and all his attitudes, are involved. And no good work is done anywhere without aid from the Father of Lights. When a series of such re-tellings turns a creation story which at first had almost no religious or metaphysical significance into a story which achieves the idea of true Creation and of a transcendent Creator (as Genesis does), then nothing will make me believe that some of the re-tellers, or some one of them, has not been guided by God.<sup>5</sup>

Speaking of his early mentor, Kirkpatrick, whom he referred to as the “Greak Knock,” Lewis wrote:

I have said that he was almost wholly logical; but not quite. He had been a Presbyterian and was now an Atheist. He spent Sunday, as he spent most of his time on week-days, working in his garden. But one curious trait from his Presbyterian youth survived. He always, on Sundays, gardened in a different, and slightly more respectable, suit. An Ulster Scot may come to disbelieve in God, but not to wear his weekday clothes on the Sabbath.<sup>6</sup>

How to deal with the “Inconsolable Longing”? Lewis answered in two passages:

If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.<sup>7</sup>

In speaking of this desire for our own far-off country, which we find in ourselves even now, I feel a certain shyness. I am almost committing an indecency. I am trying to rip open



the inconsolable secret in each one of you—the secret which hurts so much that you take your revenge on it by calling it names like Nostalgia and Romanticism and Adolescence . . . Our commonest expedient is to call it beauty and behave as if that had settled the matter. Wordsworth's expedient was to identify it with certain moments in his own past. But all this is a cheat. If Wordsworth had gone back to those moments in the past, he would not have found the thing itself, but only the reminder of it; what he remembered would turn out to be itself a remembering. The books or the music in which we thought the beauty was located will betray us if we trust to them; it was not in them, it only came through them, and what came through them was longing. These things—the beauty, the memory of our own past—are good images of what we really desire; but if they are mistaken for the thing itself they turn into dumb idols, breaking the hearts of their worshippers. For they are not the thing itself; they are only the scent of a flower we have not found, the echo of a tune we have not heard, news from a country we have never yet visited . . . The sense that in this universe we are treated as strangers, the longing to be acknowledged, to meet with some response, to bridge some chasm that yawns between us and reality, is part of our inconsolable secret . . .

Our lifelong nostalgia, our longing to be reunited with something in the universe from which we now feel cut off, to be on the inside of some door which we have always seen from the outside, is no mere neurotic fancy, but the truest index of our real situation.<sup>8</sup>

And what of joy? Lewis said:

I had been equally wrong in supposing that I desire Joy itself. Joy itself, considered simply as an event in my own mind, turned out to be of no value at all. All the value lay in that of which Joy was the desiring. And that object, quite clearly, was no state of my own mind or body at all. In a way, I had proved this by elimination. I had tried everything in my own mind and body; as it were, asking myself, "Is it this you want? Is it this?" Last of all I had asked if Joy itself was what I wanted; and, labelling it "aesthetic experience," had pretended I could answer Yes. But that answer too had broken down. Inexorably Joy proclaimed, "You want—I myself am your want of—something other, outside, not you nor any state of you." I did not yet ask, Who is the desired? only What is it? But this brought me already into the region of awe, for I thus understood that in deepest solitude there is a road right out of the self, a commerce with something which, by refusing to identify itself with any object of the senses, or anything whereof we have biological or social need, or anything imagined, or any state of our own minds, proclaims itself sheerly objective. Far more objective than bodies, for it is not, like them, clothed in our senses; the naked Other, imageless (though our imagination salutes it with a hundred images), unknown, undefined, desired.<sup>9</sup>

Mr. Lewis died in 1963 but has lost none of his popularity in the thirteen years since his death. People still read, study, wonder about and marvel at him.

There is a strange trait in us that makes us want to know everything about a great person. How did Dr. Johnson like his eggs? What was Churchill's ritual at his bath? Details such as these don't tell us much about service to the human race . . . and yet often we think they do. That is why we read biographies, search letters and memoirs, even visit the birth and final resting places of the famous. We feel that, somehow, it sharpens our senses to perceive a person as he really was.<sup>10</sup> Thus, the following accounts of C. S. Lewis:

A visitor to the Socratic Society of Oxford described his appearance at a history

lecture one evening: "He had on a battered tweed sports coat, well worn corduroy trousers, an old patterned shirt and a non-descript, antique tie. He was ruddy of complexion, radiating health, substantial of girth all over and his eyes sparkled with mirth . . . The subject of the evening was the meaning of history. A professor who preceded Lewis droned on for an hour while the audience listened sleepily. Then, when it came Lewis' turn to speak, there was immediate attention. He was exciting . . . vivid images and portraits tumbled out of him. He had no notes and spoke spontaneously with charm and lilt."<sup>11</sup>

Thomas Howard wrote about a brief visit with Lewis at Headington Quarry a few months before his death:

He was exactly what I had expected: he came to the door himself, although he was far from well, in tweed jacket and slippers, and called me by name. His eyes twinkled, and he made some amused remarks about the weather. We sat talking by a small fire for an hour or so. Lewis fiddled with his pipe and smoked one cigarette after another, and I tried to ask him everything about myth and morals and joy and Purgatory and Paradise, plagued all the while with the idea that I was making a terrible job of it and wishing that I had done my homework better. But never by so much as a cough did Lewis give me to feel that he was anything but wholly engaged by our conversation. I took no notes, although I wanted to preserve every syllable he spoke (I could not bring myself to sit there like a reporter or somebody doing a thesis). My memory for conversations being very bad, I do not remember much of what he said, but various impressions are still lively: there was clarity, agility, merriment, and this toughness and candour which I have mentioned, in the way he said what he had to say. I felt a little like the children in *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* felt with Aslan: you knew that gentleness did not suggest weakness.<sup>12</sup>

George Bailey, former Executive Editor of *The Reporter* and now a foreign correspondent for Harper's magazine is one of the few Americans to study under Lewis at Oxford. He described him in several ways:

As a teacher –

It is difficult to reconstruct and almost impossible to exaggerate Lewis's prestige in post-war Oxford. Lewis was Lewis. His repute as a Christian apologist, as a popularizer-philosopher-theologian was extraordinary. His pre-eminence in the field of English letters in university was unique. There was Coghill, there was Lord David Cecil, there were Wrenn, and C. T. Onions, but they were all, however impressive in themselves, only foothills in the shadow of the towering grandeur of Lewis. To have C. S. Lewis as tutor was universally regarded as an awesome honour. "What? you are reading English at Magdalen; that means that C. S. Lewis is your tutor!" The prospect of spending an hour every week closeted with the most eminent scholar in his field was eclipsed only by the terror of having to read an essay for his criticism—to expose one's puny efforts to the full force of perhaps the most powerful and best-trained intellect in the world.<sup>13</sup>

On evaluating an essay –

Lewis had three standard forms of comment on an essay. If the essay was good: "There is a good deal in what you say." If the essay was middling: "There is something in what you say." If the essay was bad: "There may be something in what you say." His other fairly standard comments were: "Too much straw and not enough bricks," and, "Not with Brogans, please, slippers are in order when you proceed to make a literary point." Lewis was sparing of his compliments—the highest I know of was "Much of that was very well said"—but he was quick to notice any excellence of usage. He spent five minutes praising one word I had used to describe Dryden's poetry (the word was "bracing").<sup>14</sup>

On being taught how to think –

Lewis seldom if ever played the preceptor. But he himself was so well-organized that he had no sympathy with the undergraduate who stayed up all night on the eve of his tutorial to finish (or start and half finish) his essay. He would pontificate on this one point: “You don’t have to work hard if you work steadily—only innately lazy men are hard workers.”

He would try, on rare occasions, to teach his pupils how to think: “One little squiggle goes up (to the surface of the mind) and is rejected, and so on until a squiggle finally is accepted as valid. This is the thought process.” In discussing essays, particularly in arguing points of philosophy or aesthetics, Lewis would always use analogy—the metaphor in syllogistic harness—to solve all problems. He did this sort of thing instinctively; it was his method of “picture thinking” which he used so extensively in his books. This is hardly surprising since his major scholastic feat was his acquisition of a panoramic insight into the nature of allegory.<sup>15</sup>

On his own *Allegory of Love* –

For such a man, allegory, or “allegory in little”—the constant, systematic use of metaphor and simile, “picture thinking”—became the *modus operandi* for his life work—in his speech as well as in his writing. Indeed, as a tutor Lewis worked this method to the point of annoyance. I remember the complaint of Ken Tynan, then the most flamboyant, if not the most illustrious, undergraduate in the college: “He is eternally trotting out his damned figures in tutorials—“Now if you have three apples and I have five bananas . . . ” It’s always three apples and five bananas, and no cigar. He’s casuistic.”

But Tynan’s opinion of Lewis mellowed with the years. Not long ago he told me about a BBC television appearance of Lewis’s. A programme director who specialized in candid, unprepared interviews asked Tynan if he thought Lewis would agree to appear on his programme. “He might,” said Tynan, “but you won’t catch him out: he’ll get round you, mark my words.” The prediction was borne out royally. After a certain amount of sparring, the interviewer sprang his big question: “As the authority on *The Allegory of Love*, Mr. Lewis, what is your attitude to the detailed, non-allegorical description of the act of love in literature?” “To describe the act of love in detail without resorting to allegory,” answered Lewis, “One is restricted to three choices: the language of the nursery, the language of the gutter, or the language of science—all are equally unsatisfactory.”<sup>16</sup>

On making a pun –

Lewis himself was not above the deliberate ploy. He once played me during a tutorial, and then, when the opportunity again presented itself immediately thereafter, played his visitor—in my presence—with exactly the same words. But Lewis was credited with the best impromptu pun I can remember. The occasion was a dinner party. The main dish was a haggis, that fierce piece of Scotch culinary chauvinism consisting of the blood and guts of a sheep. Lewis was seated next to a Portuguese dignitary who, while partaking of the haggis, remarked that he felt like “a gastronomic Columbus.” “The comparison is wayward in your case,” remarked Lewis. “Why not a vascular da Gama?”<sup>17</sup>

On his abilities as a lecturer –

I count his lectures among the foremost of his intellectual products. Lewis was at his



effective best as a lecturer. It was at the rostrum that he gave everything and took nothing—except the satisfaction of knowing that he was doing what he chose to do and doing it superbly. For it is here, I am convinced, that Lewis, the scholar, found his best fulfilment as a human being among his fellow men.<sup>18</sup>

Three additional passages, from various sources, shed further light on the man's ideas and thoughts:  
As a controversialist —

He had a kind of Johnsonian pugnacity. But, though aggressive, he was not offensive. He was vigorous, emphatic, but, always in the context of good humour. His dogmatism was the product of a burning honesty; he was incapable, intellectually or morally, of evasion, or equivocation. Once after a celebrated academic debate on the nature of poetry with E. M. W. Tillyard, he reminded him "We have both learned our dialectic." To which Tillyard replied later, "He is the best kind of opponent, good to agree with when one can and for an enemy as courteous as he is honest and uncompromising: the kind of opponent with whom I should gladly exchange armour after a parley even if I cannot move my tent to the ground where his own is pitched."<sup>19</sup>

As an expositor of the faith —

"Like Dr. Johnson, though dialectically formidable and capable of annihilating an opponent, Lewis was yet nobly humble of heart. He risked, and in some measure, especially among his colleagues at Oxford and Cambridge, damaged his reputation by writing books that warmly and wittily defended Orthodox Christianity."<sup>20</sup>

On the cost of being a Christian —

I wanted him to have some idea about the character and composition of the evening congregation. Those present, I reassured him, would be there by their own will and volition. There would be no conscripts. The majority would be officers rather than airmen. It was not an easy thing for an airman to separate himself from the close communal life of the barracks for the purpose of going to church. John Stuart Mill once observed that there is a social tyranny which can be a more subtle and ubiquitous enemy to liberty than any political despotism. Many an airman, during the days of World War II, was made acutely aware of a subtle and ubiquitous social tyranny that was inimical to the overt expression of any idiosyncratic belief or practice. Only a select few had the moral strength and stamina to withstand the suffocating tyranny of barracks life and the deadly pressure to conform.

The situations in the Officers' Mess was very different. Church-going among members of the middle class—the class to which most of the officers belonged—is still a badge of conventional respectability (although increasingly more honoured in the breach than in the observance). There are, of course, a number of sociological reasons for this. The church, it has been rightly said, has not lost the working class: the working class was never in it. Since the days of the industrial revolution, the church's impact on the working class has been minimal. Perhaps there is also something inherently dehumanizing about life lived in service to the machines of modern industry.

I repeated that attendance for some of these men would be costly and difficult. "It might be helpful," he quietly replied, "If I told them something of what it costs me to be a Christian."

Lewis stood in the aisle, a dishevelled and dumpy figure in a baggy suit. Having in-



voked the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, he announced his text: "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me."

He spoke of what Jesus endured on our behalf: misunderstanding and loneliness and finally betrayal and death. He vividly painted the scene in the judgment hall: the soldiers, baiting and buffeting Him; Herod, mocking and deriding Him; the disciples, forsaking and denying Him. And then he recalled, with graphic power, the horror of the crucifixion scene.

Lewis told us what it had cost him, as an Oxford don, to be a Christian. One might have expected to find within a university environment, and particularly at Oxford University, that home of lost causes, some measure of tolerance and liberality, some recognition and acceptance of the sanctity of honest belief and sincere conviction. Lewis discovered, as others have discovered before and since, that in this world there are few persons so illiberal as those who claim to be liberal and few persons so irrational as those who claim to be rational. His liberal and rational friends, he explained, did not object to his intellectual interest in Christianity; it was, they agreed, a proper subject for academic argument and debate; but to insist on seriously practising it—that was going too far. He did not mind being accused of religious mania, that familiar gibe of the natural man; what he was unprepared for was the intense hostility and animosity of his professional colleagues. Within the academic community, he unexpectedly found himself an object of ostracism and abuse.

He spoke once again of the calumnies and indignities that Christ endured. With deep feeling and burning passion, he described the wanton cruelty of the soldiers as they shouted angrily: "That's him!" "Hypocrite!" "Serves him right!" "That's what he deserves!" "Dirty traitor!" And, as he evoked the horror and the hate, he suited his action to his words, vigorously gesticulating.

It is not surprising that he "communicated," for this was powerful preaching, born of intense and passionately felt emotion.<sup>21</sup>

As the first step in a three-part summary which will, again, hold personal interpretation to a minimum, I will attempt to outline Lewis' hierarchy of values.<sup>22</sup>

Christian	Natural
God	Atheism/Agnosticism
Right Reason	Naturalism
The Numinous*	Scientism
Myth**	Sexuality
Reality	Modern Jangles***
Joy	Pseudo Events

\* Wonder and mystery versus a universe to be celebrated.

\*\* He could examine mythology and find it the result of the "gleam of celestial strength and beauty" moving upon the minds of even pagan and sinful men.

\*\*\* i.e., advertising and idiotic sophistication.

Secondly, his position on Reason and Right Reason is important and best illustrated in an essay called "Meditation in a Toolshed." Kilby provides us with a summary:

He tells of standing in a darkened toolshed in his yard and seeing through a crack at the top of the door a beam of light from the sun outside. "From where I stood that beam of light, with the specks of dust floating in it, was the most striking thing in the place. Everything else was almost pitch black. I was seeing the beam, not seeing things

by it." When he moved so that the beam fell on his eyes the whole picture was changed. "I saw no toolshed, and (above all) no beam. Instead I saw, framed in the irregular cranny at the top of the door, green leaves moving in the branches of a tree outside and beyond that, 90-odd million miles away, the sun." He concluded that these two views represent two radically different ways of seeing things. Take, for instance, a young man in love with a girl. "The whole world looks different when he sees her. Her voice reminds him of something he has been trying to remember all his life, and ten minutes casual chat with her is more precious than all the favours that all other women in the world could grant." But let a scientist come and describe the situation. "For him it is all an affair of the young man's genes and recognized biological stimulus." One is looking along the beam, the other simply at it.<sup>23</sup>

Finally, Lewis depicts the message of Christ in one of his stories when a little girl wants a drink of water but a lion, Aslan, stands between her and the stream.

"Are you not thirsty?" said the Lion.

"I'm dying of thirst," said Jill.

"Then drink," said the Lion.

"May I—could I—would you mind going away while I do?" said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl . . .

"I daren't come and drink," said Jill.

"Then you will die of thirst," said the Lion.

"Oh dear!" said Jill, coming another step nearer. "I suppose I must go and look for an another stream then."

"There is no other stream," said the Lion.<sup>24</sup>

This last illustration, I believe, depicts the essential Lewis.

Cicero (according to St. Augustine) laid it down as axiom that—"he who is eloquent should speak in such a way that he teaches, delights and moves." Then he added:

"To teach is a necessity"

"To please is a sweetness"

"To persuade is a victory"<sup>25</sup>

Judged by these standards, C. S. Lewis is, in my opinion, a teacher *par excellence*.

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Clyde S. Kilby, ed., *A Mind Awake, An Anthology of C. S. Lewis*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1969, "Preface," 7.

<sup>2</sup> C. S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*, New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, Inc., 1962, 13-15.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 26-28.

<sup>4</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, New York: The Macmillan Company, 1960, 51-55.

<sup>5</sup> C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1958, 110-111.

<sup>6</sup> C. S. Lewis, "Surprised by Joy," in Kilby, *A Mind Awake*, 20.

<sup>7</sup> Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, 120.

- <sup>8</sup> C. S. Lewis, "Transpositions and Other Addresses," in Kilby, *A Mind Awake*, 22-23.
- <sup>9</sup> Lewis, "Surprised by Joy," in Kilby, *A Mind Awake*, 23-24.
- <sup>10</sup> Thomas Howard, "Foreword," in Carolyn Keefe, ed., *C. S. Lewis, Speaker and Teacher*, London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1971, ix.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, x-xi.
- <sup>12</sup> Kilby, *A Mind Awake*, 8.
- <sup>13</sup> George Bailey, "In the University," in Keefe, 105-106.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 112.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 113-114.
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 118.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.
- <sup>19</sup> Stuart Barton Babbage, "To the Royal Air Force," in Keefe, 90-91.
- <sup>20</sup> Kilby, *A Mind Awake*, 9.
- <sup>21</sup> Babbage, in Keefe, 98-101.
- <sup>22</sup> Clyde S. Kilby, "The Creative Logician Speaking," in Keefe, 40.
- <sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 40-41.
- <sup>24</sup> C.S. Lewis, "The Silver Chair," in Kilby, "The Creative Logician Speaking," in Keefe, 44.
- <sup>25</sup> Babbage, in Keefe, 102.

## MYTH: THE ANCIENT LANGUAGE?

by

*William Beidler*

*(Philosophy)*

Myth: the Ancient Language?; the emphasis should be on the question mark. That is just the question, is it really only the language of ancient peoples, or does it carry on now in modern times? In other words, Comte said that philosophy in ancient Greece replaced religious mythology as a way of organizing culture. Philosophy was the basis of organized culture until modern times. Then science replaced philosophy in the Comtian picture. Now some of you may say that I'm whipping a dead horse; that Comte has been laid to rest long ago. But at UCLA where I was an undergraduate, he hadn't died then and I see traces even yet, of this sort of idea—that today we are on the top of the heap, we've reached the pinnacle. Science, then, in this view has helped us to gather together in a new way of organization in a different way than either philosophy or mythology could have permitted in the past. Where is modern man, then, in these areas of human experience that myth speaks of? I suspect sometimes that it is a dung heap he is sitting on, but that is to get into mythology.

Let us at the outset set down some definitions. These are purely my definitions and hence are debatable. First to distinguish between signs and symbols, a sign is purely a pointer. The thing that it points to doesn't have to be a real thing. A symbol doesn't point as a symbol, rather that which is symbolized participates in the symbol in a special way. If we, for example, were early Christians and wore a cross around our necks, then if that cross were a sign that we were Christians, it would be pointing to the fact that we worshiped a man who was executed as a common criminal. If we were to do the same, we would have to wear an electric chair on the chain. The cross is also a symbol of man's condition. The horizontal representing the social and human dimension and the vertical representing the ontological dimension, his relation to God. And for many Christians man is indeed right at the crossroads; and as with many such crossroads he can expect trouble from both directions. In other words, the way in which the cross symbolizes Christianity is different from the way it would act as a sign. The symbols are the more important for us here. If myth is a connected pattern of symbols, then we can distinguish this from concepts and ideas, which are constructions, because concepts relate more directly—causally—to signs. Jung, for instance, suggests that myth works through synchronicity, not by causal relationships. The causal dimension is applicable only to the waking state where we conceptualize things.

Of the many functions of myth, we would do well to focus on two. One is illustrated in the primitive man's use of myth, as described by Ellis, "Man dances his religion before he thinks about it."<sup>1</sup> Jung also sees primitive man extrojecting his dream symbols and working them out in life. He truly dances out what we have internalized. Thus myth organizes primitive man's culture in a very important way. Our concern might well focus on the way myth might be a focus in our culture. A second function of myth we might direct our attention to is illustrated in the old Quaker tradition of "plain talk." At one time the testimony of plain talk was important to Quakers. Against that, in many Oriental countries you would offend a man if you talked directly or plainly. You rather speak indirectly, in parables; you go around to the back door, in other words. Here are two ways of using language, one trying to be direct and free of ritual, and the other using a ritual of language to communicate symbolically. We might then explore the function of myth in organizing our experience in ordinary waking consciousness. As a first answer to these two functions of myth we might hazard a guess that myth is a focal point, ideally a rallying point, for our culture and our own identity. Like that or not that may well be the human condition.



There are more specific problems involved with myth which must be brought up. For instance, do we as individuals and as a culture ever grow beyond myth? In other words can we ever live a purely causal life, perhaps in the sense of *Brave New World*, being purely outer conditioned by some sort of causal determinism, completely free of religious mythology? Another problem, what are the sources of symbols and myth? Are they constructed in some way in man's Psyche or are they archetypal with man participating in the apprehension in the same way he apprehends perceptions? Lastly, the knottiest problem to me: if we feel alienated from our mythic roots, is there a return? Did Plato and Jacob Boehme return to primitive forms in their own use of myth, or did they find other uses of myth? If so, we need to explore just how myth plays a part in our lives. We need to explore also what I would call the expansiveness of myth. Let me give you an example of this. Many years ago my mother, who was a very tolerant person religiously, invited a Jehovah's witness who appeared at the door to come weekly to teach her the Bible. I sat in on one of her sessions in which she was explaining how the Earth was created by God on the morning of April 14, 4004. I asked her about fossil human skulls found that dated back to 50,000 years, how would she explain this. Without a moment's hesitation she said, "Oh! Yes, God created the world with an entire history built in when he created it in 4004 B. C." What do you do in the face of that? Finally in conclusion we will look into the reestablishment of myth in our culture.

One of the first things we should find out is whether our consciousness is like an adiabatic system in physics. Is it closed so that nothing comes in unless it is translated into terms of that system itself? In other words, if I began to talk to you about gayas, you would look puzzled and ask, "What are gayas?" They could be anything from a mosquito to a freight train. There is no way of knowing what I'm talking about, you have no way of directing the mind towards what gayas are. Now if I told you that gaya is the Hindustani word for cow, just in a wink you finally know what I'm talking about; and you bring into mind all that goes along with cows. The real problem here is whether consciousness is such a closed system. Gayas were closed to you until I gave a reference point within your own system by which to interpret gaya. In a slightly different fashion you probably remember that old and worn story about the little moron who was looking around in the gutter at a corner one night. A little later a man joined him and also began to look. After a bit the man asked, "Say friend, what are we looking for?" "We are looking for a quarter I lost at the last corner," replied the moron. "You fool, why are you looking for it up here?" "The light is better up here," replied the moron. Now this is just the sort of problem we have with consciousness. It focuses on the light and the bright, and the dim and less bright gets pushed into the outer reaches of consciousness. Again, this is the way in which consciousness is self-referring, self-enfolding. But how do the elements of consciousness really appear to us? Well we would have no trouble with percepts; they come to us as do something like green apples; many things also come to mind with it—different varieties, worms, etc. If, on the other hand, a green blob appeared on the desk or on the floor by your feet, that's another matter. We've already labeled it as being a green blob. If that blob went up to your leg and bounced off, then bounced off the leg of the nearby chair, you'd breathe a sigh of relief and say, "It's some sort of thing, inanimate." On the other hand, if it went up to your leg and backed off, and then did the same to the nearby chair, then probably the hair would rise on the back of your head. You'd say, "Ah! Ha! It is intelligent." So when you investigate something, your mind is very active in trying to tie into the object and to pin on it labels you are familiar with. Just so sense data become percepts when you can adequately categorize them. All this is familiar to us; there is no problem with that. Ideas may give us a little more difficulty, because they seem to be a little more self-referring in that they well up from where we don't always know; even our memory as we recall is rather mysterious. How is it I

can remember a specific event a week ago? Where does that memory come from? Oh, we can trace it back to parts of the brain. We can stimulate the brain and create the idea again. Still, it stands quite a bit different in our experience than percepts.

There's a way of getting at this that is not my own originally, but came so strongly in its comparison that its truth would help us here. This is Alan Watts' analogy between "macular" and "peripheral" vision<sup>2</sup> as indications of the different ways elements of our experience indeed do come into consciousness. Macular vision is a narrow part of our experience, being about 2% of total vision; nevertheless, it is that part that gives you clear and distinct impressions. You can separate one object from another quite distinctly by shape, color, etc. Now I actually don't because I have a stigmatism so I'm more constantly using peripheral vision. Philosophically, I have not yet been convinced the world is that worthy of being seen clearly and distinctly. When you rely on macular vision, you are relying on a narrow spot of clear and distinct objects. It would be just as if we were in a completely black room with a pencil flashlight shining on objects; as the light passes from objects they go completely out of vision. On the other hand, the opposite problem of having only peripheral vision is the reverse; you see everything only as blurred blobs. If I concentrate my vision on one person, the others sitting nearby become blurred blobs. I may know who is sitting there because I remember. So I'm constantly using macular vision in juxtaposition with peripheral vision as figure-background.

Now all this is an interesting analogy to how the rest of our mind works. If we relied entirely upon intellectual-conceptual construction, we'd be like the poor chap in the dark room with the pencil flashlight. On the other hand, if we insist on being anti-intellectual relying only on the romantic feelings that well up in us from the corners of consciousness, we'd be like one of my friends who had only peripheral vision. He was legally blind. Well, this analogy may get us into difficulty, but I think it carries us pretty far.

The cornerstone of any phenomenological study of myth is the necessity of studying altered states of consciousness. This study has made it clear to me the way in which man participates in myth, in a way which little else would. We might begin such a study with psychedelic experience. Some may have read studies to show that the artist, for instance, who paints while under LSD or such drug, feels he is on the brink of creating the masterpiece, but what comes out is often mediocre. These studies of artists, as I remember, are not very convincing. It's been more like the experience of William James as he reports in *Varieties of Religious Experience*.<sup>3</sup> He had a great mystical experience while under some chemical agent; it was accompanied with the sense of great revelation. Upon returning to regular consciousness he looked down and found he had written, "The price of shoes is two dollars." That's one of the troubles; on the other hand, let me tell you some of the cases in which I've been involved. Actually if you wish to pursue this farther, Stanislav Groff is far beyond anything else I've read in the use of LSD in therapy. He's been much more systematic than most who've worked in this area.

Let me give you some examples of psychedelic experience from my own perspective. Many years ago I had given a series of discussions in the Adult Evening College at Queens in the area of the philosophy of religion. There were catchy titles to these discussions; one was, "Is There a Chemical Path to Blessedness?" That may seem a bit odd to you, but actually it is a reasonable question. If LSD has had such claims from ancient times, such as the ancient Hindus who used Soma, the Dionysians in Greece who used psychedelic mushrooms, then we'd do well to ask that question. One of the dear older ladies in the Evening class came up after the session and said, "You know I've been widowed for two years and am alone now. Just last week I lost the last thing that meant anything to me—my religion; it's nothing but a social gabfest. Now I think the best thing for me is a good trip on acid."

It is not the place here to go into much of the detail of the twelve hours I sat with that lady while she

lived through much religious mythology. Let's take a couple of examples. At one point she said, "I see a cross." Then, as if walking towards it she then reported, "I see a figure on the cross. Oh! It's me!! I'm being crucified." At this point her hands tightened up and she writhed in pain. What do you do when one is living a religious myth? In this case the myth itself suggested the answer. I said, "Look behind the cross and see the resurrected figure." This snapped her out of the down sliding crucifixion-suffering pattern to the other half of the myth—the transcendence of life itself. Her next encounter could only be said to be something like the mirage of the prophet Mohammed—his tour guided by angels through the various levels of heaven. In her case a young girl guided her by the hand from one area of light through dark areas from which monsters of all sorts would loom ominously in front of them. The little girl would go up and say, "Boo", or kick the monster playfully in the rump and it would disappear.

This experience is one of many, such as the myth of eros in the last book of the Republic. Her experience, though having Christian elements, is yet essentially her own; it was a little girl who led her by the hand, not Gabriel.

It took another day after these twelve hours to explore what had happened, but from that time on her entire religious life has been refocused and settled. Now don't go out and drop acid just on this; this lady prepared for this trip and had a large measure of control. If you are interested, read Groff's new book.

Let me give you an example from the other end of the spectrum. There was a middle aged man in the psychedelic group—a group of middle aged people exploring the early flush of mind expansion through drug movement. In those days the group would send off in the mail for peyote buttons and then try to ingest them with French dressing and lettuce in a salad; even then, those wretched things were hardly palatable. This middle aged man of the group was one who played ego games pretty heavily. He had married into a wealthy family and apparently the wife held the purse strings. He had not been very successful in business and currently was under therapy. In this case I was there more as an observer, not playing an active part in the trip. In the room where he was sitting, there was a hollow lead duck on the mantle piece over the fireplace; it was used to store matches. Very soon after the drug took effect, he fastened on that lead duck. I went over to it and opened it up showing him the matches, saying, "Oh! Look, Al. It's hollow." He laughed for twenty minutes and after that spent six hours exploring the various symbolic meanings of that lead duck. Never once did he see that the lead duck was symbolic of his own condition, playing ego games. He couldn't internalize the experience to see that was his own condition. This trip did not bring him to the new religious life of the lady in the previous example.

We need to go more to the Huxleys than to the Als for the paradigm of psychedelic experience. One of the conclusions of Huxley in his early mescaline experience was that the mind is like a valve, a constriction actually. The drug, then, seems to open the mind and free it from its usual frame of reference.

Groff again is excellent in carrying Huxley much farther. In his therapy Groff found his patients passing through three phases often accompanied by mythological death. First they worked in terms of Freudian symbols. They would reach a crisis and die symbolically, to be reborn out of Jung into a more mystical frame of reference, one apparently closer to Groff's own position.

Let me pass on from this, because it is only one small aspect of the whole picture of altered states of consciousness. Equally fascinating, although much more difficult to interpret are various psychic states of consciousness. Let me take only two examples. The first might be seen in the many cases of the dying soldier. F. W. H. Myers in his book *The Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*<sup>4</sup> reports many such cases. The soldier in these cases appears to his mother or close relative hundreds or thousands of miles away. His mother might turn around and see him in the doorway. She then turns back to lay down her pot or what she



had in her hand, and when she turns back around again he is gone. The next day or two she gets a telegram that the son died in battle about the time he appeared to her. Now I'm not interested in trying to prove whether or not the son actually appeared; rather, it is of interest primarily as a phenomenon. The mother experienced her son being in the house—and here this is but a “form” of many other cases of like nature—when she was in a normal waking state. She thought she saw him physically. How did this apparition come into her consciousness?

To work on your mind a little more insidiously, let's focus on the case of two English school marms. The book describing their experiences is called *An Adventure* by Alice Moberly & E. Jourdain. These two turn-of-the century school teachers usually took their vacations together and usually on the continent. This year reported in the book was a trip to Versailles. In essence, what happened was that their experiences of the gardens at Versailles were shared in all aspects but one, in which case one had seen something the other had not. When they returned the next day to further explore, they found the gardens quite different than they had been the day before. What made this an interesting case was they each had written a detailed account of the gardens the evening upon returning to their rooms. As you can imagine, this second day experience was quite disturbing. They both spent most of the summer delving into various libraries in Paris, studying the historical accounts of the Versailles gardens. Their conclusion was that on the first day they both had experienced the gardens as they were in the 18th century and as actually only a few of their day knew them. Is this case of mutual hallucinations? This case is but one of many such where people seem to walk through time rather than space. The insidious nature of such cases is that no matter how you face this experience, you are going to have to give up one or another of your cherished notions about the adiabatic character of consciousness. These are but a few examples of a host of others that are altered states of consciousness and ought to play a part in any of our thinking about the way symbols and myth come into our consciousness. I won't dwell at all on the religious cases which are very obvious ones to focus on. We have all run across these. If Jesus comes to someone and touches his life, we usually remain of two minds about such an experience. But I well remember a fellow student in a small sect of Hindus in Northern India who often had Lord Krishna come to her in meditation. Now Krishna doesn't come to us; it's somehow outside the frame of symbols. Krishna coming to someone somehow sets differently in consciousness than Jesus or Mary coming to him. Those who are Quakers should find this old and familiar. They sit in silence “Waiting on the Lord” as George Fox put it. Indeed, vocal ministry usually comes, sometimes from the top of the head rather than from the spirit, but one can usually tell when there's a gathered meeting. It's not anything tangible, but is something which is participated in. The experience of a gathered meeting broadens the confines of ego self. The Quaker is not alone here of course; he is a part of a much wider pentacostal group of churches which are built around a “Priesthood of all believers” with all participating, rather than passively sitting listening to a sermon. The native American church also is somewhere in this spectrum. Through peyote the Western Indian talks to Jesus; they are touched by the Holy Spirit. These are all cases of altered states of consciousness.

Let's go beyond these examples, because they have all been merely attempts to touch concordant notes in your own experience. Let's look at myth to see the way it sits in waking consciousness. In normal waking consciousness, I think we could agree, we rely rather a great deal on signs, on the representation of things which come into our consciousness. We build “concepts” out of them as we relate them into perceptual patterns. Now symbols, on the other hand, always “surprise” us. They come into consciousness in a way, if not from altered states of consciousness, at least from reaches of consciousness that lie on the periphery of our “vision,” to use the analogy, rather than in the center of vision. They come because we are aware of the symbol or myth pattern after it looms into consciousness, so to speak. In other words, symbols and myths



themselves, the very occurrence of them, are indications that consciousness is not a closed system. My teacher in India, a great sufi and a student of Rudolf Otto, used to say that he thought that psychic experience and altered states of consciousness were indications that "the other world leaked." That's a crude way of putting it, and he was, indeed, much more eloquent than that; but when you really get down to it, that is what the incursion of myth and symbols into our consciousness really means. What's really important here is not that there's "another world," whatever that may mean; but rather here myth relates to waking consciousness with an element of surprise, gives us the feeling of participating in something already worked out. This seems to me to be one of the important conclusions from any phenomenological analysis of myth and symbols.

Let's pass on to ask another question more broad than these. We need to focus on the question also whether one's mythical roots can be lost. Recent history should show us we've been uprooting our mythical roots very quickly. Sartre speaks of this in saying, "We're condemned to freedom." There's no way that Zeus could lead a triumphal march into the city, "he comes limping in behind." Rabbi Rubenstein even more poignantly put it, "A Jew after Dachau couldn't worship the same Jaweh."<sup>5</sup> Jaweh was dead for the Jew; he died at Dachau, if not on the cross as the Christian claims. God is dead, the old Gods have died. We may be again whipping a dead horse here, but in a more mundane way, old myths have passed.

Our society has been founded on the sense of competition, unique to the 18th century, perhaps. This sense of competition was based on the strong sense of community in the 18th century. Without this Christian sense of community as a base, we don't have competition, we have strife. This is a very important point; competition can only work in a community framework; without it you end in strife and fall out of the "container" in which you work. You are falling back to rely only on your macular vision; you've lost the peripheral vision which is really the container for your experience.

What then are we asking about myth? Have we really lost our mythical roots or is it only a repression? This question may lead us out of our situation in answering it. Does myth, then, have any patterns which are inherent in it itself? Obviously, I'm biased towards saying yes. Jung, of course, is strongly oriented towards this position in his therapy. He claims some myth patterns are archetypal, and come up into personal consciousness when they never have been into consciousness before. They are a part of the collective unconsciousness for him. For example, the Swiss doctor Jung mentions in the middle Terry Lecture had rejected his Roman Catholic upbringing as many in the scientific community had so done. He came to Jung because after the rejection he began to have disturbing dreams which he couldn't interpret. These dreams turned out to be early Christian symbolism which he seems not to have any acquaintance with. These symbols were outside his usual frame of reference. They were symbols which were trying to tell his consciousness something which had been rejected. To go beyond this to see what a picture of man Jung and Groff's work indicated, we see that man cannot be a tabula rasa, a Ford automobile just off the assembly line, one pretty much like another. Jung and Groff both find what for the lack of adequate terminology could be called a bio-psychic programming. This patterning goes beyond just physical genetics and includes what Jung calls race consciousness. The notion of the collective unconsciousness in Jung would lead us back to that age old controversy over innate ideas in philosophy.

Another even better example of the way myth comes into consciousness, as studied by Jung, is found in his "Wotan,"<sup>6</sup> an exploration of the rise of Nazism. He seems to say there that the German never had taken care of his shadow side, and when the myth patterns had welled up they were appropriated or energized thru the shadow side. These myths are found in Wagner, and even before, and were hardly Christian. The energy from the unconscious—carried by myth in conjunction with the shadow side of man's psyche—overwhelmed virtually an entire people.

Let's return to this later, but now let's refocus on the question whether mythical roots can be lost. An Indian philosopher of this century, Sri Aurobindo, had much to say about this subject. Aurobindo was a fascinating man, a scholar in Greek and Latin as well as French and German. In addition he was a great saint in the Hindu tradition. He picks up on the thought of an unnamed German historian<sup>7</sup> in describing three stages in cultural change. A culture begins in the minds of a few creative individuals—such as the writers of our *Federalist Papers*. They become crystallized, institutionalized in the second stage. Finally however there comes a time when people outgrow the institutions yet lack the creativity of the founders to change; and so the third stage is entered—the subjective phase. Here man is thrown back on his own subjectivity for his own moral and metaphysical justification. At that point there is much thrashing about in the culture, man having lost his moorings in familiar institutions. Much of this makes sense to me. Especially this last phase seems to be the state of our times. We are indeed thrown back on our own subjectivity with the demise of many of our institutions. The implication is that in this thrashing about comes the impetus for a new creativity if not a new culture.

Whether you take Aurobindo's picture, which is rather hopeful, or the more dreary Sartrian notion, there are certain conclusions we can come to about reestablishing our own myths. The first conclusion would be that we need to integrate our own consciousness. In other words, I do think Yoga is correct here; we are in a fragmented state in our consciousness. Yoga, then, is a uniting or “yoking” of the various fragmented aspects of our being. In another form we tend to either repress or reject our dreams. How many people really talk about or work with their dreams as they do their ego-states? In this vein even “imagination” tends to be used as a pejorative term. Looked at even another way, this need for integration of consciousness is seen in the many roles we play. On Sunday we're taught the golden rule of doing to others as we would have done to us, then on week days we follow the “brass rule” of doing it to the other fellow before he does it to you. This may be artificially extreme; but I think we all admit we do play roles often which don't merge well at all. Part of that is our culture; we don't live in a simple monolithic culture.

From within this fragmented state, symbols are beginning to reemerge. Let me give three or four examples. The space voyager or astronaut is one such symbol. Going to Heinlein for another example we find the notion of “More than Human” who can “grok” one another; they are not limited as humans to perceiving one another across an alien space. More than anyone else, Teilhard de Chardin is the harbinger of this new symbolism and gives it a new dress, indeed, a new direction and form. His idea of the “man of planetized consciousness” is not just “pie in the sky” idealism. Actually as a Jesuit Teilhard sees Jesus very much as that man of planetized consciousness, the one who has made that next step in the evolutionary ladder. It is much more complex than that, but basically that is its form. Notice that both Heinlein and Teilhard's symbol is man in the universe; whereas the astronaut, the space voyager, is by and large a leftover symbol as man against the universe which of course is the problem of modern man we've been addressing ourselves to.

Rather facetiously it comes down to the question of, “What do we do till the Messiah comes?” If we didn't participate to some degree in myth, we wouldn't even recognize the messiah when he or she comes. How many Christians would recognize the messiah were she a woman or if she were black? We might well be as the Pharisees who peered way over the appearance of Jesus because they were looking for the messiah to come with a parting of the clouds with angels. Rather he came quietly as a simple carpenter's son. Our messiah may well be with us now. If he were I suspect we'd find some reason to lock him up or put him in a mental institution or some such good way of adapting him to our culture.

In the final analysis are we really a mythless society? From my own view I think we haven't lost our myths; we've only repressed them. More positively maybe, we've evolved beyond our myths in Aurobindo's

sense. We've reached beyond the institutionalization of these myths which lie at the base of our society. Now we need to roll up our sleeves and not reconstruct new myths intellectually but perhaps try to find them in a different way. This task is one I hope we will keep before us this year as we focus on myth.

Now the one substitute we have been living on for some time—"scientific cosmology"—is really a constructed myth in the above sense much as with contrived literature. A return to a myth for us both individually and socially would be largely through the individual "inreaching" in Aurobindo's sense, falling back on his own subjectivity and not thrashing about bemoaning his fate that he has been "condemned to freedom." Rather he should reach back in and perhaps when his own being is reoriented, he then can send this back into society. Almost every major cultural impetus has occurred this way. Jesus is a very good example of this. He was certainly not in favor in Jewish society of his time. In other words we culturally collect this welling up in the individual and we give this collected experience a new form and dress.

Keep in mind however, this is exactly what Hitler did in Germany. It works both ways. Hitler did play on old myths and indeed played well. That's Jung's caution, that we all have a shadow side which we cannot repress.

So that's my caution and that's the problem as I see it with myth. This is what we must thrash out before we ourselves have any sort of mythical reawakening.

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Havelock Ellis, *The Dance of Life*, N. Y. 1951, Modern Library, p. 36 ff.

<sup>2</sup> Alan Watts, *The Way of Zen*, N. Y., 1956, New American Library, pp. 21, 35 f, passim.

<sup>3</sup> William James, *Varieties of Religious Experience*, N. Y. 1949, Modern Library, p. 378.

<sup>4</sup> F. W. H. Myers, *The Human Personality and Its Survival of Bodily Death*, London, 1954, Longmans, 2 Vols. passim.

<sup>5</sup> Rabbi Rubenstein, Lecture, Queens College, 1966.

<sup>6</sup> Carl G. Jung, *Saturday Review*, 1937.

<sup>7</sup> Sri Aurobindo, *The Human Cycle*, Pondicherry, 1955, Chap. 11.



# MYTH: THE PLAY OF BEING

by

R. Melvin Keiser

(Religion)

Why are we interested in myth today? Why have you come out on a Wonderful Wednesday afternoon to hear a lecture on myth, a third lecture on myth? Why are we running a whole year long series on myth—and only four years after Jim Gutsell ran the first, very successful Myth Colloquium? It may not be entirely fortuitous that we have been unwittingly subjected to a secretarial error of some profundity. This first section of the Myth Colloquium, under which this lecture is being given, has been advertised around campus as “Methodological Reflections: On the Return and Function of Myth.” What I originally wrote for this introductory section, however, was “Methodological Reflections: On the *Nature* (not the ‘Return’) and Function of Myth.” And yet this mistaken intrusion of the word “return” may give us a clue as to why we are here: we have lost something and hope for its return.

What is it that we sense we have lost? It would be premature to say: we have lost a “mythic consciousness” and long for its return. For this presupposes we know what myth is, and this is precisely what we do not know and, in our explorations in this Colloquium this year, want to find out about. Then we have lost something and do not even know what it is that we have lost, and yet hope to find it here, or at least find out what it is that we cannot find? Perhaps. We are not wholly ignorant, however, of why we take time to think about myth. Perhaps it is because we experience a loss of meaning in our modern world and sense in the word “myth” the possibilities of recovering a larger and more vital meaning in life.

This is why I, at least, am drawn to the investigation of myth, and why, I believe, there is today such a host of extraordinary minds engaged in the exploration of the nature and function—and return—of myth. I am thinking of such people as Elizabeth Sewell, Joseph Campbell, Mircea Eliade—about whom I want to say something in the course of this lecture—and also Stanley Hopper, Amos Wilder, Rudolf Bultmann, Nathan Scott, Northrop Frye, and Claude Levi-Strauss.

It may be, however, that our metaphor of “loss” is too insipid to describe this “return” to myth. For many of the above, and for myself, there is a sense not merely of loss but of having been taken captive, of having been seduced or bewitched, so that this more comprehensive and invigorating meaning has been wrenched from our grasp. The great contemporary philosopher of our ordinary language, Ludwig Wittgenstein, has put it this way: “A *picture* held us captive. And we could not get outside it, for it lay in our language and language seemed to repeat it to us inexorably.”<sup>1</sup> And what is this picture that has held us in bondage? While Wittgenstein was not given to speaking of “myth,” this picture is, nevertheless, what we might call the “myth of modernity.”

## I. Serious Talk: The Myth of Modernity

What is our myth of modernity? Before we look at this, if we are going to use the term “myth,” we really need to have at least a tentative working definition of it. I will offer several definitions of myth as I move through this talk. So this is merely the first, and by no means adequate. To present the sum of such a rich subject as myth in one quintessential definition strikes me as either an act of recalcitrant foolhardiness or of consummate wisdom—and I do not trust myself yet in such delicate matters to be able to tell the difference. Myth at first blush I would suggest is a central belief, commitment, or value that under-



lies our living and thinking, and gives shape to them. Now the commitment underlying our living in the modern world is to the seriousness of meaning: all meaningful talk is serious—not playful. Serious talk is meaningful because it refers to real objects, whereas playful talk is meaningless because it does not refer or point to anything but is a mere game. It is the scientists and social scientists who talk seriously, so the myth goes, and it is the poets and priests who engage in mere play. Not entirely however; to the extent that the language of the latter refers to objects, peculiar though they be, it too is serious talk.

What I mean by an “object” is a thing that is what it is explicitly, and that is all that it is. What it is is exhausted in the sum of its explicit relations to the environment. It is univocally itself; there is no ambiguity in it. Our perspective may introduce some ambiguity but this is irrelevant to the thing itself. Different perspectives do not reveal other facets of reality, since an object is not multi-faceted but merely one thing. When the self is interpreted as an object, it is seen as the sum of its parts, the product of external conditioning. When society is seen as an object, it becomes a complex of economic, political, social, and psychological determinants. And the world: it is taken to be the aggregate of objects that fill it—blindly running atoms. As the great contemporary poet, Wallace Stevens, puts it:

Do not speak to us of the greatness of poetry,  
Of the torches wisping in the underground.  
Of the structure of vaults upon a point of light.  
There are no shadows in our sun,  
Day is desire and night is sleep.  
There are no shadows anywhere.  
The earth, for us, is flat and bare.  
There are no shadows.<sup>2</sup>

This is the myth of modernity, that there are only objects in reality, that the earth is shadowless, flat and bare. This is the myth that there is no myth. As Bill Beidler suggested last time, some of the important architects of our present era have depicted the process of cultural evolution as having moved beyond myth, beyond this childish superstition or manner of speaking now outgrown. You have it in the founder of positivism, Auguste Comte, and his progeny, and you have it in the idealism of Hegel and his descendants.

Where this anti-myth of the modern world leaves us is in a state of solipsism and scepticism. As a self I am on the defensive. Against the pressure of this “picture” that all is objective, I conceive myself as this “little bright light” that Rudy Behar so movingly portrayed in his lecture. As this bright light of consciousness dwelling amidst a meaningless world of objects, I am isolated and begin to doubt the existence of anything outside this delimited shaft of brightness. To use Wittgenstein’s language to make Beidler’s point, I fall into a “mental cramp” over the existence of other things and other minds. If we ask one of the basic questions that must be asked in any study of myth—Is myth indispensable to being human?—the answer from the modern world is a resounding “No.” Ironically enough, in a world where everything is supposed to be only one thing, the echo from this proclamation, reverberating in our souls, comes back a muffled “Yes,” for the state of this objective world we have been describing is far from human.

Taking serious-talk about objects as the paradigm for all meaningful language, we have turned ourselves into disembodied selves—that little bright light—dwelling within a demented world. Taken captive by this picture, we must, as Wittgenstein says, “battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language.”<sup>3</sup> To be released from the spell, we turn to myth in the hope that playful language may not prove to be as meaningless as the modern world has supposed.

## II. Playful Talk: Myth—Primitive and Christian

When we turn to traditional myth, be it primitive or Christian, we find a bewildering array of incredible figures and events: the world being created out of the body of a murdered god or by the mere saying of a word; heroes going on quests for immortality, undergoing various tests by terrifying deities; or the immortal gods becoming human flesh to partake of mortal pleasure or to undergo the degradation of human death. We find as well a plethora of logical confusions. As Joseph Campbell has pointed out, the dancer in a primitive ritual is identified with the god whose mask he wears, even though he is but a mere man and the maker of that mask. Aristotelian logic tells us something cannot be both *x* and not-*x*; yet here in myth a man *is* the god while simultaneously merely a man. Similarly in the Christian myth, Jesus *is* God even while being clearly a mortal human. Myth is like dreaming, where contradictory things can happen, where I can be several different people, and yet myself, all at once.<sup>4</sup>

Traditional myth is playful talk. This language does not refer to objects; it cannot if it is contradictory, for an object can be only one thing. Nevertheless some have sought to explain myth in terms of the various objects to which it points. But this way leads to despair: mythic talk is not serious object-talk.

Here in this conflict between serious and playful language we experience within ourselves the opposition of modernity and traditional mythic worlds, for we are participants in both. Serious talk is our paradigm, what we strive to achieve; yet the playful language of religion and literature has nurtured in us much that we prize. We reject playful language because it does not give us unequivocal truth; nevertheless, we cannot let it go, for we sense within it some truth that can sustain us in this journey that is life. It is this dilemma, more felt than recognized, I believe, that brings us out on a day such as this to explore the nature of myth. The “return” is not however easy. We have lived under this bewitchment of seriousness since the time of Descartes in the early part of the 17th century and have felt ever since the tension with the co-existing Christian myth. My suspicion is that the “return” must be a “going ahead”: we cannot return to premodern Christian myth nor to pre-Christian primitive myth but must in some way carry this heritage through the alienating anti-mythic modern world into a new postmodern world that draws on traditional and modern but transcends both. It is not only the dilemma then, but the hope of a new world aborning, that plunges us into the study of myth.

## III. Why Speak Playfully?

But why speak playfully; what good is it? We could answer, it is just plain fun, and it comes as a relief from all that dogged seriousness of object-talk. We do take delight in hearing stories—even stories about what the gods were doing before there was a world, what humans were doing when the world was new and there were heroes in the land, and what we should anticipate as the ending of all things. If we look more closely at what is going on in this language, we find that it is dealing with such ultimate themes as life and death, the mystery of our origins and destinies, and the conflict between good and evil. In the midst of our fun in using playful language, we discover the tangled web of ultimate meaning of our existence being woven by the tales of these incredible figures and events. The playful language of myth is a game in which we learn, however dimly, something of the ultimate context of our being human in the world. There is a second attempt at defining myth.

Before we pursue this further, let us back off and ask simply, how it is we as selves relate to language,

whether mythic or not? Are we not both *in* and *behind* all our talk? When I say something, I commit myself in that act of speech. I ask for something or recount something or refuse something. In each case I am *in* my speech; I am committed to it and what it means. The words have meaning as I use them, as I perform this act of speaking. But I also stand *behind* my words. I give them, what William Poteat calls, my “personal backing.”<sup>5</sup> There are countless ways of doing this. I can utter the same sentence straightforwardly, ironically, suspiciously, defensively, ebulliently. In each case I am giving a different personal backing to my sentence, and thus altering the meaning. I not only *mean* by which words I say, by which words I stand *within*, but I also *mean* by how I use those words, how I stand *behind* them, give my backing to them. This metaphor of “standing behind” is not meant to suggest a disengagement from the very words I am committed to as I stand within them, but is rather to call attention, beyond the active involvement of the self in speaking, to the differences in meaning created by the diversity of ways in which the self enacts speech.

If I stand both in and behind my words, there must be some play in the words themselves, some flexibility, to be used in such a variety of ways. If words have to be fiddled with to get them to mean various things, if they do not always just mean one thing on their own, apart from being used by a speaker, then the self’s use of them must in some sense be play. In the light of *the play in words* and *our play with words*, it is not insignificant that Wittgenstein, for our different ways of talking, uses the metaphor of “language-game.”<sup>6</sup> To use words is to play a game, is to be active in our standing in and behind our words. Once having said this, the suspicion begins to grow that even our serious object-talk is a game; perhaps it is not as serious as we had thought. But enough of that for the moment.

If what I have said here about the meaning of words is true, I must undertake a risky task: I must disagree with my friends and colleagues Behar and Beidler. In the sheer audacity of such an undertaking I am well aware that they might rise up and smite me in their wrath. I am moreover aware that a goodly number of outstanding minds of recent times, such as Paul Tillich and Suzanne Langer, would support them. Nevertheless, I will make the attempt. If what I have said about meaning is true, then the typical distinction between *sign* and *symbol* makes no sense. This distinction is made in terms of participation: the sign does not participate in but merely points to a reality, whereas a symbol participates in the reality to which it points. But if we stand in as well as behind every use of language, we participate in the use of signs as much as of symbols. I am not saying there is no difference between them, but it cannot be drawn in terms of participation as such.

It is also a mistake, I believe, to say that sign and symbol mean by “pointing.” Some signs, perhaps many, are used to point. A road sign is used to point to the curve in the road ahead. But what does a traffic light point to? It alerts you to stop or go, but that is an alerting or a commanding, not a pointing. And is it not the user of the sign that does the pointing with the sign, when it does point, and not the sign itself that points? How else understand the experience of Kierkegaard who, when on passing a shop window, saw a sign hanging in it that read “Philosophy Done Here.” You can imagine his disappointment upon entering the shop when he discovered it to be a store selling signs. Was that sign pointing?

Is not the same true of symbols, that they have their meaning in the various ways in which they are used rather than in pointing? What does the symbol of the American flag or of the resurrection of Christ point to? Does not the flag express a complex set of loyalties, and perhaps criticisms, that we adhere to in our society? Does not the resurrection express, and indeed create to some extent, a profound hopefulness in the face of death and a transformation of self in the face of life? These symbols surely can be used to point: by the resurrection I mean to refer you to St. Paul’s experience on the Damascus road or to Jesus’ experience on



Easter morning; by the American flag I mean that bit of cloth with stars and stripes on it hanging over the post office. But the symbols themselves, apart from a person pointing, do not refer; and most uses of symbols are not to point.

It might be helpful at this point to attempt a definition of a “symbol,” since it is essential to myth. Paul Ricoeur, the contemporary French phenomenologist who teaches at both the Sorbonne and University of Chicago, presents the best definition I know of: “symbols are the manifestation in the sensible—in imagination, gestures, and feelings—of a further reality, the expression of a depth which both shows and hides itself.” A symbol is therefore a “region of double meaning” which “means something other than what it says, . . . where another meaning is both given and hidden in an immediate meaning.”<sup>7</sup> We might simply say that symbol is a meaning complex with a double, or multiple, meaning that has an ordinary and extraordinary level present in it. Thus to speak of a “table” as both something to eat on and as a list of numbers is a doubleness, but not a symbolic doubleness, since each of these is ordinary, lacking any hidden other meaning. Similarly, the word “water” lacks a depth which both shows and hides itself when used on the ordinary level as that which quenches thirst, nourishes our bodies, irrigates our gardens, as that in which we wash, can be drenched, or can drown. When used on the extraordinary level, however, “water” can express spiritual death and the demonic, or self-transformation and the promise of the salvation of souls.

Leaving aside for the moment the question of how symbol relates to reality, what does the manifestation of this extraordinary level do to the self? Symbols give the self more room in which to come to play. Our ordinary talk of tables to eat on and water to quench our thirst, as important as these are, leaves the self constricted; the symbolic, on the other hand, opens up a vast region in which the self can express itself, can come to know more of itself and the world. If I stand behind my ordinary uses of the word “water,” I also stand behind my symbolic uses. This requires a much more complex standing behind. It is one thing to give my personal backing to a request for a drink of water and another to give it to a request for self-transformation. More of the self comes into play in the latter case. As Ricoeur suggests a depth within the self comes to expression in the latter case that does not show itself in ordinary talk.

But it is not just a depth in the self; it is a depth in the world. Living in the world, I find in symbolic language matters of ultimacy—such as self-transformation, death and the demonic, life and goodness—coming to expression. To stand in and behind such language expands the self. There is always more to the self than what gets expressed in language, since the self stands behind as well as within what it says. The “more” increases as the self stands behind this larger region of ultimate meaning present in symbolic language. Symbols do not point at another reality; they open up a region of ultimate meaning hidden within our living in the world, and in doing so expand ourselves.

Inasmuch as symbols are essentially ingredient in myth, we are now in a position to attempt yet another definition of myth. Here we must be explicitly critical of our opening definition of myth because it mentioned nothing of the story-form of myth. Myths have always traditionally been stories. It is through stories that they body-forth this region of ultimate meaning hidden within our living in the world. And so we can venture: myth is symbols at play in a story—a story that manifests this region of ultimacy as the space in which a greater fullness of the self can come to play.<sup>8</sup>

Why speak playfully in myth? Because myth through its play of symbols opens up regions in the self that would otherwise remain hidden, and thereby expands the self.



#### IV. The Functioning of Myth

We have made a beginning here at seeing that there may be a usefulness for the playful language of myth in spite of its lack of "seriousness." We are beginning to suspect that it may prove indispensable to being fully human, inasmuch as it deals in some way with a dimension of ultimacy in the living of our lives in the world. There are in fact many ways in which myth relates to this dimension and we need now to look more closely at these ways. How does myth function? Drawing upon the thought of three of our major thinkers about myth today, I want to suggest three ways in which myth functions. Then to these three I want to add a fourth.

The first function to be noted is that myth *orients* us in our world. Rudy Behar was getting at this when he spoke of myth as a way of reaching toward community and reality outside of the isolated Cartesian self, that "little bright light" When we look at myth, we find symbols both of nature and of society: of sky, sun, moon, earth, and of Gilgamesh or Abraham gone on quest, Amor and Psyche involved in their amours, Jesus crucified, and the Kingdom of God expected. Myths orient us in our social and natural worlds. Compare the Christian and modern myths. The Christian myth orients us toward society as the gift of God and the promised fulfillment of human existence. The modern myth, on the other hand, orients us toward society as alien, a system of external conditions over against the self. Similarly, nature for the Christian is the creation of God which will in some way participate in the final consummation of all things. Whereas for modern man, nature is an alien system of blindly running atoms set in opposition to our little bright light of consciousness.

To these two different levels within which myth orients us, Joseph Campbell adds two other levels: the psychological and metaphysical. Myth orients us psychologically by shaping our values so as to fit us into society and by bearing us in our journey of life from birth to death. Metaphysically we are oriented one way or another by myth toward "the monstrous nature of this terrible game that is life."<sup>9</sup> Christianity exemplifies this psychological and metaphysical orienting in the myths of the Divine Will (in obedience to which one either conforms to society or seeks to transform it), creation *ex nihilo*, dying and rising with Christ, and the expectation of a future general resurrection. Modern myth, on the other hand, orients us as isolated individuals toward life, moving like an arrow from nothingness to nothingness—not so much affirming the monstrousness as the mere indifference and chance of it all. One function of myth, then, is to orient us psychologically, sociologically, cosmologically, and metaphysically in our world.

A second function is *integrating*. Myth not only orients us on these different levels, it opens up these levels to each other. In an age when the astrophysicist has nothing to do with the psychologist, and the sociologist nothing to do with the metaphysician, myth opens the levels of our experience in these different realms to each other. While the modern anti-myth isolates each area, the Christian myth through its symbolization of God creating, governing, and redeeming opens each to the other, and binds together, cosmos and self, society and ultimate mystery. Mircea Eliade, the great contemporary historian of religion, Rumanian-born, now teaching at the University of Chicago, puts it this way:

What we may call *symbolic thought* makes it possible for man to move freely from one level of reality to another. Indeed, "to move freely" is an understatement: symbols, as we have seen, identify, assimilate, and unify diverse levels and realities that are to all appearances incompatible. Further still: magico-religious experience makes it possible for man himself to be transformed into a symbol. And only in so far as man himself becomes a symbol, are all systems and all anthro-po-cosmic experiences possible, and indeed in this case his own life is considerably enriched and enlarged. Man no longer feels himself to be

an “air-tight” fragment, but a living cosmos open to all the other living cosmoses by which he is surrounded. The experiences of the world at large are no longer something outside him and therefore ultimately “foreign” and objective”; they do not alienate him from himself but, on the contrary, lead him towards himself, and reveal to him his own existence and his own destiny.<sup>10</sup>

Myth not only integrates by opening these different levels to each other within our living in the world, it also integrates by using symbols to hold together opposites, such as life and death, good and evil, divine and human. We have already noted that mythic talk from the perspective of Aristotelian logic is confused; myth presents contradictories as the same. This serpent before me wriggling on the ground is not only the familiar snake which inhabits my garden but is as well the male god who is consort to the Great Goddess, or is a tempter that will lead me into sin, or is the embodiment of Nature’s capacity for rebirth, or is a phallic symbol of my Oedipal conflict with my father. Now how can anything be all these: it is either a snake or it is not a snake? Nevertheless, myth engenders this complexity and holds it all together. By doing this, myth is truer to life than Aristotle’s logic, because in the living of our lives we experience this complexity in the world. Human existence is not just either life or death, good or evil; it is both, and in a complicated way that we will never be able to sort out, and yet can get in touch with and express in mythic talk. Myth opens up different levels and the opposites of human existence to each other so that they cohere, so that we cohere. As we have said before, it gives us space to appear in our fullness as selves. Now we see that this fullness is multi-dimensional and involves what is traditionally called the “coincidence of opposites.”

The third function of myth is *discovery*. In *The Orphic Voice* Elizabeth Sewell speaks of myth as a method of inquiry, a method that underlies both science and poetry. She writes: “Discovery, in science and poetry, is a mythological situation in which the mind unites with a figure of its own devising as a means toward understanding the world.”<sup>11</sup> Every situation of discovery is fraught with intimations of new possibilities that become actual and articulate through the self giving them form by uniting itself passionately with some figure. Thus in science the figure of the machine in the 18th century and of the organism in the 19th century made it possible to articulate the Newtonian and Darwinian views of the world. The ancient mythological symbol of the serpent with its tail in its mouth provided Kekulé with the figure by which to grasp the pattern of the benzene ring in organic chemistry, and the double helix provided the figure for Watson’s discovery of the shape of DNA in bio-chemistry.

Similarly in the social sciences, thinkers seek to discover by uniting themselves with figures ranging from that of the market or of warfare between classes in economics to that of Oedipus or the computer in psychology. And in the humanities the poet uses figures of the sun, or earth, or rock to discover something of how it is to be in this world, and the philosopher and theologian unite with figures of game and play in order to discover the nature and function of myth.

We have distinguished three different functions of myth: orienting, integrating, and discovering. There is now yet another function that needs to be noted, and here we attempt a further response to the scepticism and solipsism embedded in the modern anti-myth.

### V. Play in the Self and the Play of Being

The fourth function of myth is *evoking*. The use of the playful language of myth evokes both self and reality; that is, it manifests what before was hidden. We have already seen that the play of symbols in myth

brings more of the self into play. The self becomes expanded as its dimension of ultimacy is figured forth in mythic language. For the self to express something of the deeper reaches of its being requires that there be play in the self. An object has no play in it because it is only one thing; it has no ambiguity. If the self is the mere sum of its objective determinants, there is nothing hidden within it that could at some point become manifest. But we have seen in this exploration of myth that the self does have hidden dimensions which do become manifest in mythic language.

But if the hidden, that which is unknown within us, is becoming manifest in our speaking mythically, do we really know what it is we are doing or who it is we are becoming? Since that which gets expressed comes from what is explicitly unknown, we do not know what it is that we are after or what is going to happen. To engage, therefore, in the play of mythic symbols evokes trust, a faith in the unknown. This is true in each function of myth; each opens the self to transformation and therefore to the unknown newness of its becoming. If we turn serious at this point and demand a certainty about what is going on when we use mythic symbols, if we insist on the law of non-contradiction and want to know to what objects these symbols are pointing, we miss the meaning, for under these circumstances, that which is hidden will not become manifest. The mythic dimension will only offer up its favors to playful solicitation, not to serious command.

Myth is evocative, then, of the self, of the self's faith in the unknown. But what of reality? How does myth bear on reality? What I want to say in essence here is that myth is not only evocative of self but also of reality. Not only faith in my unknown depths but reality as well is made manifest in myth. Each of the other three functions of myth assume our dwelling in a world. We orient ourselves within a social and cosmic world. The different levels integrated are our varying relations to the world. What we discover is something in the world.

What of reality is evoked in mythic language is the background of our dwelling in the world as selves. All myth is, as Sewell says, a figuring—a figuring by an “I.”<sup>12</sup> But a figure—to use the same metaphor of figure-background as Bill Beidler—always exists against a background. There is always a context within which I see my figure, and so with the act of figuring. I do my figuring against a background. Even if you see this figuring “I” as a “little bright light,” it has its existence, as Behar said, against a background of cavernous dark.

What is this background against which the figuring “I” engages in mythic language? Ultimately it is a background of mystery that surrounds and permeates ourselves and our world. It is that mystery within which I live, out of which I have come in being born, and into which I will pass in dying. What is the nature of this circumambient mystery—is it something to be terrified of, to have confidence in, or to be indifferent towards? Placed through the mythic coincidence of opposites in the midst of that which is terrifying and fascinating in this ultimate mystery, myth evokes within us some sort of faith—faith not now simply in the process of the unknown coming to expression within me but in the very mystery of being itself.

As another attempt at defining myth, we could say myth is the expression of mystery; it is a figuring forth of the mysterious background of the self. Myth not only orients, integrates, and discovers; it evokes. It is evocative of faith and of reality; it calls forth trust in the mystery of being within which I live, and move, and have my being.

But I would not have you think that this ultimate mystery is a mere emptiness, a vacuum, for out of it has come the patterned world—the far-flung stars and galaxies, the vital processes of organic life, the congregating of humans in society, and the configuring of images in mythic play. Engaging in such mythic play we could say—as yet another attempt at defining myth, mythically—that there is a mysterious patterning that roots us in our world (or is at the roots of our being in the world), which when it reaches a sufficient level of articulateness, where the imagination joins it with a figure, we call it myth. This patterning is, I



believe, what Wallace Stevens is getting at when he writes:

. . . The clouds preceded us  
There was a muddy centre before we breathed.  
There was a myth before the myth began,  
Venerable and articulate and complete.  
From this the poem springs: that we live in a place  
That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves  
And hard it is in spite of blazoned days.<sup>13</sup>

Is myth indispensable to being human? We must conclude that it is. We return to myth because we need these functions it performs. To be human we need to be oriented within a world, to have our different relations to this world integrated, to discover something of the nature of the world, and to have evoked the self in its faith and reality in its mystery. Myth carries us out of our modern solipsism and scepticism and returns us to the community of being—which we had never really left, for this is the place in which we live as selves. Myth is not therefore the mere projection of psychic contents, the meaningless play with figures, our serious modern world has told us. Myth is rather an indispensable form of expressing reality, the place where the further reaches of reality come to play. Myth is the play of being.

## VI. A Concluding Story

It is perhaps fitting to end a talk on myth with a story—and then a comment. The story is a Hasidic tale about Rabbi Eisik of Cracow. Eisik of Cracow was a pious man and one who was responsive to his inner depths. He dreamed of a treasure buried beneath the bridge in front of the royal palace in Prague. He had the dream three times and finally decided that he must answer the inner prompting, and so he started out. After a long journey he came to this very bridge and saw the palace standing behind it. He was sure that a treasure was buried beneath that bridge, but he found that the bridge was guarded day and night. And so he loitered there for several days. Finally the captain of the guard noticed him and very kindly asked him what he was doing there. Eisik then told him of his dream; whereupon the officer burst into laughter. “Why my poor man,” he said, “if one should attend to mere dreams, I myself would have long ago struck out for Cracow to find the home of a rabbi named Eisik, for I had a dream that ordered me to look for a treasure in his home buried in the earth behind the stove. So you should not be so foolish as to follow the inner promptings of dreams.” Eisik of Cracow very politely thanked the captain of the guard, turned on his heel, and began the journey home. When he arrived home, he went behind the stove, dug in the earth, and indeed there was the treasure.<sup>14</sup>

There are a number of points to be made about this story, but the one I want to call your attention to is that Eisik finds the treasure at home in the earth. Is this not what myth does and why it is indispensable; it helps us to “live in a place/ That is not our own and, much more, not ourselves” by making us at home in the world, by making manifest the treasure at home in the earth?

## FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, trans. by G. E. M. Anscombe (New York: Macmillan Company, 1953), par. # 115; his italics.

<sup>2</sup> Wallace Stevens, “The Man with the Blue Guitar,” *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, ed. by Holly Stevens, Vintage Books (New York; Random House, 1972), p. 135.



<sup>3</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, par. # 109.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Campbell, *The Masks of God: Primitive Mythology*, Viking Compass (New York: The Viking Press, 1970), pp. 21-29.

<sup>5</sup> William H. Poteat, "Myths, Stories, History, Eschatology and Action: Some Polanyian Meditations," in *Intellect and Hope: Essays in the Thought of Michael Polanyi*, ed., with an intro., by Thomas A. Langford and William H. Poteat (Durham: Duke University Press, 1968), pp. 210-215.

<sup>6</sup> Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, pars. # 7 and 23.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. by Denis Savage (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1970), p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> Hannah Arendt, in *The Human Condition*, Anchor Books (New York: Doubleday, 1959), speaks insightfully of story-telling as the space of the self's appearing: " . . . action and speech create a space between the participants which can find its proper location almost any time and anywhere. It is the space of appearance in the widest sense of the word, namely, the space where I appear to others as others appear to me, where men exist not merely like other living or inanimate things but make their appearance explicitly" (p. 177).

<sup>9</sup> Joseph Campbell, "Mythological Themes in Creative Literature and Art," in *Myths, Dreams, and Religion*, ed. by Joseph Campbell (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1970), p. 138.

<sup>10</sup> Mircea Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, trans. by Rosemary Sheed, Meridian Books (Cleveland and New York: The World Publishing Company, 1970), p. 455.

<sup>11</sup> Elizabeth Sewell, *The Orphic Voice: Poetry and Natural History* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1960), p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> See Sewell, *The Orphic Voice*, p. 15.

<sup>13</sup> Wallace Stevens, "Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction," *The Palm at the End of the Mind*, p. 210.

<sup>14</sup> For the telling of this tale I have drawn upon Mircea Eliade's rendition of it in *Myths, Dreams, and Mysteries: The Encounter between Contemporary Faiths and Archaic Realities*, trans. by Philip Mairet, Harper Torchbooks (New York and Evanston: Harper & Row, 1967), pp. 244-245.

## MYTH AND BELIEF

by

James B. Gutsell

(English)

It is interesting and significant that the three myth lectures we have had all dealt with epistemology, or what kind of knowledge we can have and how we know it. The emphasis has been much less on the *what* we know than on the *how* it can or cannot be known. Yet, it is surely the *what* in which we are interested. And that is just what we have a hard time coming to.

Rudy Behar's Cartesian self is a light occupying a finite but indefinite space full of misty recesses and obscure corners, appearing in the dark of nowhere and doomed to extinguish itself just as mysteriously. This self makes no claims on certainty, on knowledge of the *what* we want except through problems of pure logic. This self cannot for certain have any confidence of shedding light beyond itself. It cannot give us a *what*. This is not a particular dilemma of Rudy Behar's. It is the dilemma of every man who has thought during the past several hundred years about the self and how it knows.

William Beidler, taking another tack entirely, has been able to describe the *what* only in terms of a metaphor of *how*, but he insists that the *what* is there. The *what* is that which you know through your peripheral vision, the places where you are not focusing your mental eye. Using another metaphor, he says the mind is like a valve which may be opened or shut to paranormal experience, to truths, or at least to perceptions, of a different dimension. What these perceptions are, however, is not clear. We were given examples of symbolic visions facilitated by drugs and suggested by a guide. The validity and meaning of this sort of experience remains obscure to those of us who have not had or accepted it.

We should note here that William Beidler's concern with *how* is quite as great as Rudy Behar's, but the assumptions are quite different. It is in a way the process itself which is of first importance, for if we can see the right way, we will see the important things. Knowledge, for him, is a matter of where your attention rests. The job is to make the unclear clear and to see that clarity of common sight is ultimately less important. In the Beidlerian world the light, as it were, is outside the self although available to the self. The self is not the light but the shadowed place which must open its windows to the greater light. This is a standard religious metaphor which I am foisting off on him, but I think it applies. This position also suggests that the self is not the *what* of ultimate knowledge or importance. It has its being in the larger realm of the mysterious and the infinite.

I may have exaggerated these two positions somewhat for the sake of contrast, but I want also to indicate some similarity. Both positions recognize the mystery of the unknown. The difference may be principally in how the mystery is viewed. But the Cartesian dilemma tends to lead to one of two solutions, either universal idealism in which nothing is, in the usual sense, real; or to materialism in which only the objects of sense are real. The idealistic option is not in itself mystical but approaches the world of the mystic; the mystic, on the other hand, makes a claim for the ultimate reality of what is ordinarily beyond our grasp. It not only exists, it is knowable and it holds the greatest value. It finally answers our questions, about truth, not through faith but through experience. The job is to cleanse your sight, to believe you can see, and then to have the vision.

Coming to Mel Keiser, I find it harder to be quite certain what his position is or might imply. But if I understand him, he is struggling to get out of the Cartesian box of knowing nothing but self. In particular he is protesting against the materialistic assumptions provided us at a more or less popular level. He has his hope set on the Beidlerian vision. His method of getting there, however, is somewhat different. His belief, or myth if you will, is that Carl Jung, the psychologist and mystic, is right. Jung's position seems to be something like this:

there is an ultimate truth. Although this truth cannot be known through direct mystical experience, it can be known through a sort of indirect mysticism at one level and through a study of symbols at another. One level is personal and involves dreams and dream-like states; the other is an academic pursuit, although not just that. The scheme of things would seem to be that there is an ultimate light, a final reality but that it is unknowable to man directly. Between man and the ultimate there is a realm of symbols, or as Rudy Behar might say, an interface, a meeting point. The symbol is what embodies what is knowable to man. These symbols express what we discover in Beidler's unfocused area of vision. They are, in a way, at the opposite poles from sensation and reason as a way of experiencing. They are also non-verbal, although they might be described in literature. The value of scholarship to such experience is that it is the means by which one untangles the riddle of the symbol one has experienced. This is particularly true for modern man who in his limited rational vision has forgotten the great symbolic systems. So one studies the ancient religions and beliefs, signs and symbols, to solve the mystery, to discover the what, the content, of the dream. This whole endeavor is to get out of what that rationalist Ivan Karamazov calls his Euclidian mind. The Jungian or Keiserian myth argues that the whole rationalist movement since the 17th or 18th centuries has brainwashed mankind into believing less than he knows. The study of myth, then, becomes an academic means of grabbing the long tail of religion as it curls mysteriously through the dreams, myths, poems, and folk tales of the ages.

From a purely existential point of view this grab is indeed interesting. It offers new dimensions and rich possibilities in a broad range of experience which rationalists from Kant to Freud have dismissed as meaningless; worse yet, as delusory. More importantly it suggests, if vaguely, that some sort of ultimate knowledge, even if it is couched in mysterious forms, is available to men. It suggests that man may be more than the sum of his physical and rational parts. It takes emphasis off the isolated self and relocates men's minds in the edges of the infinite. It makes dream and art of greater ultimate concern than science, social science, or philosophy, by de-emphasizing the value of objects and logical systems. At the least it claims that such a redirection of concerns and values is more psychologically healthy.

This perspective, belief, myth, is at least lots of fun. The dust bins of history in which some of us like to rummage turn out to be the depositories of truth. The shaman, the yogin, the *I Ching*, alchemy, and all of that, take on vital contemporary significance. And for literature this is a fine perspective also. The poet once again claims that he is inspired. His poems write themselves out of the realm of the archetypal infinite, and they are as mysterious to the poet as to the audience. And they are significant, not merely emotive gushes of the Freudian neurotic.

My procedure so far has been mainly, but not purely, to survey the situation. I have spent more time on the area occupied somewhat jointly, as I see it, by Beidler and Keiser because that is what we have mainly been given and because that is most difficult to understand. What we have needed, and this hour should have been devoted to it, is a presentation from someone in the fields of science or social science. It has been spoken about but not from. I have been trying and will continue to try to deal somewhat with that perspective, but the procedure is unfair at least to the extent that we are not prepared properly to speak about it. There have been, especially last time, many snorts from the world of physics and perhaps justly so.

I want to address myself now to some problems, first of all to the question of evil. There have been several major explanations of this problem. Traditionally in religion, that symbolic body of thought, evil has been ascribed to various deities who are involved in destruction. For the Christian the problem has been one of justice. Can one justify a system or a deity which is so intimately involved with unnecessary suffering? Would a just god, as Dostoyevsky puts it, set up a system which involves the hideous suffering of innocent children? For all systems, the goal is to remove oneself or eliminate this undesirable quality of life.



The rationalist tradition—which is the modern one in all of its major formulations, for liberals, Marxists, Maoists, and National Socialists, this whole body of hopeful and frequently enlightened men since the 18th Century—has accepted the myth of progress, the basic belief of which has been that evil is not a cosmic force, is not inherent in human nature, and therefore can be eliminated. Evil is a matter of a whole set of environmental factors: family life, education, poverty, drudgery, and so forth. In this view man is seen as a tablet or as a computer into which desirable or undesirable attitudes, ideas, habits and beliefs can be imprinted. In short, man can be corrected. Evil can be eliminated by reason. Evil is a problem of bad human engineering. With good engineering, with enough reforms, we could correct all that. The dream of the future has always been a fuzzy one, but in general it resembles Marx's classless, stateless society of free, just, equal men. I recall an old prayer from my childhood: "From ghosties, and ghoulies and long legged beasties and things that go bump in the night, dear Lord deliver us." And this has been the hope.

The outcome of this enterprise has, as we all know,<sup>5</sup> been ambiguous, and yet the dream still exists, the myth of progress. In France the revolutionaries set up temples of reason to replace the churches as a state religion, but the revolution subsided into a blood bath, and in the end the leaders were assassinating each other just as they had eliminated the aristocracy and from the same reasonable motives: Truth must not be threatened or compromised. We do not have to run through the abysses into which the dream subsequently fell in Russia. Pure altruism soon turned to pure power lust, and Stalin executed not just the dissidents but all of the party officials down to the local levels. In the revolution and its aftermath perhaps ten or twenty million people died. The pace of modern enlightened destruction has grown to an incomprehensible degree. We now have enough nuclear weapons poised in ships and silos to destroy the world many times over.

All of this cannot by any means be laid at the feet of the myth of rationality, but rationality has seemed incapable of achieving the only useful purpose it has. The very success of reason, technology and the highly organized state, have created problems of equal proportions. The powers of organization are equally the powers of disorganization; the powers of creation are those of destruction. Siva is also Kali.

And in this whole picture, the most significant use of myth on a social level has been the Nazi myth of German people and the German state. This released a capacity for horror which is simply unimaginable to most of us. That myth made it possible for people just like us in most respects to be either the prisoners or the guards at a place like Dachau. At Dachau there was a pistol range where you could practice on real targets. It was used so extensively that they had to make ditches to drain off the blood.

Let us consider some aspects of the logic of the myth of progress and reason. In this general view Marx and B. F. Skinner, the most influential American psychologist, can be seen as maintaining roughly the same position: men are finite creatures; they are limited and therefore understandable and correctable. It is possible for a dedicated selfless and brilliant man to understand the whole range of human problems and to devise solutions to these problems. If the scientist or reformer could acquire the power, he could make men better, happier, healthier, and if it is possible to do this, isn't it morally imperative to do so? In the process of all this, however, certain problems arise. The greatest is that the reformer comes to regard mankind as merely objects to manipulate. This is bound to lead to a loss of respect for their values and individual idiosyncracies, and thus to a loss of respect for their very worth. This is the problem with anyone who organizes people or who for other reasons regards people as objects. I heard two remarks from colleagues recently which suggest this point of view; both have or have had more than usual responsibilities in the organization of the college. One said, "People are either knaves or fools and it isn't the knaves you worry about." The other remarked that he had discovered the secret of happiness, "to manipulate people so they don't get in your way." The problem I am raising is not a theoretic-



tical problem. It is one of the problems at the heart of our whole myth of progress. It is the enlightened dehumanization of mankind. There are lots of other influences which tend to bring this about also, but this is not the place to survey the whole scene even if I were able to do so.

The point I am trying to get to is this. It seems to me that we have had two periods of human history that we can know about. In the first the mythic mind predominated. Out of this era we got our great moral systems, our religious systems, and much great literature. This period in the West created both myths and what we might call psychic energy which propelled us into the past three or four centuries. They gave us a belief in the worth and dignity of man and a hope in the possibilities of the human future. The last great burst of energy came with a discovery of the practical capacities of man to understand and manipulate his environment. We have been riding on this myth for some time. We have gone from frankly mythic thinking of the sort Mel Keiser and others propose, in which truth is to be found in the leaking of the infinite into the finite, to a belief in the finite as the whole and in our capacity to deal with it. But neither of these modes of thought or sets of beliefs have solved our problems. In fact, the very hope of solving problems may be making them worse. But if we look back at the history of the world in its earlier more Jungian state, as it were, the story is not just Saint Theresa and Shakespeare, it is one terrible war after another, in the name too often of a myth. Neither mode of thinking seems to have produced any final solutions to what we can know, how we can know it, or to what we should do to survive. Modern disillusionment is entirely understandable. There is every ground for modern man to see the world as absurd if he adopts a rational set of beliefs. I see no way around it in thought. But what of the other way. What does it offer? Most notably National Socialism in the recent past with its Dachaus. More noticeably in the present we have a resurgence of occultism in general. Serious adult people talk on television about astrology. Witchcults thrive. Demonology is the biggest thing on the paperback racks after pure sex and violence, both representing reactions to the same problem. Most interestingly we have the growth of the flying saucer myth. This is the old joke and theatrical device of the Greek stage elevated to the realm of faith: the God in the Machine. In its most current version human civilization, if not humanity itself, is due to the intervention of flying saucer beings. Men are thus creating their gods once more in their own images and out of the principal area of modern faith, the faith in technology. But we have all of this burping up as it were from the mythic mind. What are we going to do with it? Isn't it legitimate myth? How do we decide if it is true? How do we know if it is desirable? From what sort of experience and using what facilities do we make judgments about these matters?

It seems to me that mythic thinking as a mode of thinking raises terrific problems. One only has to recall the experiences of the town of Salem to see the problem. How do you tell the difference between truth and falsehood? It seems to me that we are travelling a very risky road when we advocate opening the bag to the archetypal and unconscious. These psychic areas have a way of donning the clothes of reality. People actually saw the tongue of one Salem girl blister, and break open as she screamed that Proctor's form was thrusting a hot iron down her throat. Most of the incidents of *The Exorcist* have been described in clinical studies.

Do we have a choice between Salem and Stalingrad, which may be only the extremes of two ways of thinking; but extremes have a way of happening? Is there another way which embraces the two poles? Or does the metaphor of poles necessarily imply a larger body between the two where a useful interplay can take place? I think it is this area of interaction which we need to explore.

# MYTH IN ROCK MUSIC

by

Gary M. McCown

(English)

As every other speaker in this series, I too must start with a definition of myth. Mine comes from Aristotle's *Poetics* where myth means story or plot. We may say a narrative becomes a myth when (conflating Aristotle with Carl Jung) it embodies the desires and the fears of the culture which produces it. In this sense, myths may be called the dreams of mankind . . . or its nightmares. What I wish to do here is to examine several of the most significant songs from popular music of the last ten years—rock music—to see whether such songs depend in any way upon myth as I have defined the term. This means we must ignore a large body of songs which contain no narrative, love songs mainly. But, as I hope to show, many songs from the era do suggest a plot and so seem to describe what appears to constitute a myth of contemporary youth culture.

Where do we begin? Let's start in the period of the 50's, that complacent "silent generation" which was suddenly disrupted with a new sound in popular music, a new sound where energy and passion began to dominate over lyrics, rhythm over melody. The sound was rock and roll. Its origins were in black music which was increasingly being heard over radio and was thereby entering the consciousness of white youth. The lyrics from this early period of rock mark no significant advance over the June/moon/croon variety manufactured previously by Tin Pan Alley hacks. Here's a sample "protest" lyric sung by The Coasters:

Take out the papers and the trash,  
Or you don't get no spending cash,  
If you don't scrub that kitchen floor  
You ain't gonna rock and roll no more.  
Yakety-yak.  
Don't talk back.

Despite such inane lyrics, the young record-buying public created by the baby boom responded to the beat. Elvis appeared and the skyrocketing sale of rock and roll recordings began to reflect a new phenomenon. In 1950, for instance, 200 million dollars worth of rock records were sold; in 1960 it rose to 600 million and by 1970 to a staggering 1,100 million.

But modern rock music does not begin to construct its myth until the advent of two groups, or rather, of one group and one individual. The individual was, of course, Bob Dylan, and the group was the Beatles.

Let's look at Dylan first since it was he (by the Beatles' own admission) who influenced them so greatly. Dylan's importance started when he began to make songs that *said* something, songs whose lyrics treated topical and political issues as well as the deeply personal and painful problems of growing up. His topics were not moons in June but stories from real life like the one about the black domestic from Baltimore who was brutally caned to death by her rich white employer, "The Lonesome Death of Hattie Carroll," or about the current of dissatisfaction with American values as in "Blowin' in the Wind" or "The Times They Are A'Changin'."

It was not until Dylan backed himself with an electric rock and roll band, however, that he instantly reached a large public. Here in a stanza from the song that made him a rock star we hear the beginning of a new voice, a voice of protest which goes beyond the adolescent whining of "Yakety Yak" to touch the sorest places both in American society and within the psyches of youth increasingly disturbed by

what they saw around them. In chains of flashing images Dylan depicts a society in which the young are monotonously advised to “please her, please him,” catch the brass ring of American success defined in materialist terms and, as a reward for 20 years of schooling, “They put you on the dayshift.”

Get sick get well  
Hang around an ink well  
Ring bell, hard to tell  
If anything is goin’ to sell  
Try hard, get barred  
Get back, write braille  
Get jailed, jump bail  
Join the army, if you fail  
Look out kid, you’re gonna get hit  
But users, cheaters  
Six time losers  
Hang around the theatres  
Girl by the whirl pool  
Lookin’ for a new fool  
Don’t follow leaders  
Watch the parkin’ meters.

In Dylan’s majestic version of the medieval ballad of Lord Randall, “Oh Where Are You Going My Blue-Eyed Young Man,” his critical vision rises to include the whole spectrum of an amoral, uncaring society oblivious to racism, oblivious to the threat of nuclear holocaust, and oblivious to the most basic virtues of being human. It is here that a principal feature of the rock myth emerges, the creation of a new role for the singer/poet—that of prophet. This prophet’s voice, unheard in Cole Porter’s wittily urbane lyrics of the 30’s and unknown entirely in the factory-made mediocrities from the Tin Pan Alley heart of the 40’s and 50’s, was instantly imitated by a host of young rock singers around the world: Frank Zappa and The Mothers of Invention, Grace Slick and The Jefferson Airplane, Peter Townshend and The Who.

The effect of this outpouring of topical songs which spoke so directly to the very real anxieties of young audiences was immediate and electrifying. The rock singer was transformed into the new hero of the young culture. A myth was taking shape, and central to this myth was the role of prophet or guru that the singer took upon himself.

Here is an early version, Paul Simon’s, from “The Sound of Silence” (1964):

And the people bowed and prayed  
To the neon God they made,  
And the sign flashed out its warning  
In the words that it was forming.  
And the sign said:  
‘The words of the prophets are written  
on the subway walls and tenement halls  
And whispered in the sounds of silence.

Jim Morrison’s protest to the wasteland of human feelings, the widening gulf between generations and parent and child, assumed a more horrifying shape. In his song entitled “The End,” a version of the Apocalypse, we find these words:

There's danger on the edge of town,  
Ride the king's highway.  
Weird scenes inside the gold mine;  
Ride the king's highway west, baby.  
Ride the snake  
To the lake  
The ancient lake.  
The snake is long  
Seven miles;  
Ride the snake,  
He's old and his skin is cold.

As his vision of retaliatory evil engulfs him, the singer begins to stride down the hallway of his parents' house, systematically visiting the rooms of brothers and sisters, coming at last to his parents' room with:

"Father?"  
"Yes, son?"  
"I want to kill you."  
"Mother, I want to . . . "

Not all rock songs, I hasten to add, prophesied the acting out of the Oedipal complex, but underlying many of them was the voice of doom, the voice of Amos preaching to the market place at Bethel, or Isaiah predicting a new Messiah to save us from our sin. In this wasteland of despair, the enemy is no longer an easily identifiable dragon (as he was in some Arthurian myth); he is, instead, the faceless monolith of contemporary technological society—the "Combine" as Ken Kesey labels it in his protest novel entitled *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*. In the hands of these "Masters of War" (Dylan's phrase), we are only "pawns in their game" (another Dylan phrase).

During this angst-ridden age of parent-child conflict, of imminent nuclear holocaust, of a widening war in Viet Nam financed with money from an American government which repressed marijuana smoking but sanctioned business interests to exploit TV and mass advertising to push sleeping pills, alcohol, and other drugs on a consumer-oriented society, during such a period the emergence of a New Messiah, the rock guru, was inevitable. As Carl Jung has suggested, the myths we invent service the needs of our society, and for the youth culture, a messiah whom they could believe and who would speak *for them* was absolutely necessary.

What sorts of advice did these prophet/singers give? What sorts of action did they urge? There seem to be three major responses to these questions during the period 1964-71. The first is the traditional response of earlier versions of the myth of the hero: combat with the enemy. This response was articulated in the Rolling Stones' song "Street Fightin' Man," a song contemporary with the Berkeley, Chicago, and Paris riots of 1968, and in the Jefferson Airplane's song about "Volunteers of America." Here's a bit of that:

One generation got old  
One generation got sold  
And this generation's got *no* hesitation at all . . .

Then comes the refrain: "Up the revolution! Up the revolution."

But such a response was impossible to act out as the riots proved. The THEM was larger than the US.



During the Chicago convention police riot of '68, several members of the rock group named Country Joe and the Fish were set upon by some Viet Nam veterans in the lobby of their hotel and severely beaten. The veterans' response to the protest music of this rock group was: "Why don't you like America, you dirty hippies?"

Combat with the enemy, however, was never really advocated by any majority of the important rock singers of the time. At the same time that "Street Fightin' Man" was being heard, the words of the Beatles' song, "Revolution," were contradicting it:

But when you talk about destruction  
Don't you know that you can count me out.

For the Beatles, the answer was "to free your mind" not wreck the Establishment. Other rock groups acknowledged the problems of acting out hostility in a political arena. Here are some ironic verses from "Won't Get Fooled Again" by The Who:

I tip my hat to the new constitution  
Take a bow for the new revolution  
Smiling free at the change all around  
Pick up my guitar and play  
Just like yesterday—  
Get on my knees and pray  
We don't get fooled again.

One of the most touching songs which disavows combat with the enemy as the proper action for the youth culture is "White Ships on the Water," written by David Crosby and Stephen Stills. The setting here implies the narrow escape of the two speakers from a nuclear holocaust which has spread radioactive particles, the "silver" covering the people on the shore, over the country. One speaker, a refugee from one of the two camps, cautiously greets a survivor from the opposing side:

S: If you smile at me I will understand, 'cause that is  
something everyone does in the same language.  
D: I can see by your coat, my friend, you're from the other  
side. There's just one thing I've got to know, can you  
tell me please, who won?  
S: Say, can I have some of your purple berries?  
D: Yes, I've been eating them for six or seven weeks now,  
haven't got sick once.  
S: Probably keep us both alive.

Wooden ships on the water very free, and easy.  
You know the way it's supposed to be.  
Silver people on the shoreline let us be.  
Talkin' 'bout very free, and easy.  
Horror grips us as we watch you die.  
All we can do is echo your anguished cries.  
Stare as all human feelings die.  
We are leaving, you don't need us.  
Go take a sister, then, by the hand.  
Lead her away from this foreign land.

Far away, where we might laugh again.  
We are leaving, you don't need us.  
And it's a fair wind, blowin' warm out of the south  
Over my shoulder. Guess I'll set a course and go.

This subtle and sad disavowal of violence as the proper response to the Enemy leads us to a second answer that rock singers, acting their roles as prophet and sometimes guru, gave to their audiences: pacifism, and victory through peaceful resistance. We can hear this in another Stephen Stills song written for The Buffalo Springfield entitled "For What It's Worth:"

There's battle lines bein' drawn,  
Nobody's right if everybody's wrong.  
Young people speakin' their minds,  
Gettin' so much resistance from behind.  
It's time we stop, children,  
What's that sound?  
Everybody look what's goin' down.

A community of believers in peace and brotherhood, not an army using force to fight force, is what is being urged. The mythic dimensions of this community of believers is very apparent in a song which became the hymn for this generation. I refer to Joni Mitchell's "Woodstock" song, an outgrowth of that incredible happening in upper state New York when 500,000 young persons came together for a weekend of rock music, peace, and affirmation of Joni's words:

We are stardust  
We are golden  
We are million year-old carbon  
And we got to get ourselves back to the Garden.

This affirmation of Edenic innocence, however, involves an act of imagination, an act of will to transmute war machines into images of peace. And this is what the final stanza in the poem does:

By the time we got to Woodstock  
We were half a million strong  
And there we heard the sound and celebration  
And I dreamed I saw the bomber jet planes riding shotgun in the sky  
Turning into butterflies above our nation.

Woodstock nation, with its ideals of peace and brotherhood as the proper mode of resistance to the enemy, became every bit as real in the mythologizing imagination of young people as that other version of "getting us back to the Garden" in Milton's epic *Paradise Lost*. You recall how at the end of Book XII Michael shows Adam a vision of the world to come (a rather horrifying vision resembling Bob Dylan's) but urges Adam to buck up and add faith, patience, temperance and love to his knowledge. "Then wilt thou not be loath

To leave this Paradise, but shalt possess  
A Paradise within thee, happier far.

And here we come to the third—and most significant—mythic response in the rock culture to the anxieties of the age: "A Paradise within" or, as more modern parlance has it, "getting your head together."

This response differs from the second in that it is entirely nonpolitical. Pacifism is close to it, but pacifism *is* a political response: it has to do with man's relations to his fellow man, communities. But 'getting your head together' is an entirely personal matter, or, to seize upon the appropriate metaphor, a "different trip."

For a "trip" it most certainly is. Beginning in the mid-sixties we began to witness an outpouring of songs which narrate the experiences of taking a trip, a journey into unknown territory, a voyage to unexplored places within the human mind and heart. The image of the journey should alert all of us students of mythology to the mythic dimension implied. From Homer's *Odyssey* to Dante's *Divine Comedy* to Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" and Tennyson's "Ulysses," the narration of a journey into the unknown has served to epitomize every culture's aspirations and its feats. For the Victorian poet Tennyson, for example, the hero's voyage embodied the ideals of British Empire, the Puritan belief in the holiness of work, and the ideal of progress.

. . . but something ere the end,  
Some work of noble note, may yet be done,  
Not unbecoming men that strove with gods . . .  
. . . Come, my friends,  
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world,  
Push off, and sitting well in order smite  
The sounding furrows; for my purpose holds  
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.

Perusing some titles of the more popular songs and albums during this period shows instantly the importance of the voyage motif in *Magical Mystery Tour* by the Beatles; *Yellow Submarine* also by the Beatles; *The Point* by Nilsson, a children's fable where little Oblio takes a trip into the "pointless forest" only to encounter a guru-figure called, appropriately, The Rock Man; "Marrakesh Express" by Crosby, Stills and Nash; "Rocket Man" by Elton John. And I cannot avoid quoting the original "trip" song, Dylan's "Hey Mr. Tambourine Man":

Take me on a trip upon your magic swirlin' ship  
My senses have been stripped, my hands can't feel to grip  
My toes too numb to step, wait only for my boot heels  
To be wanderin'  
I'm ready to go anywhere, I'm ready for to fade  
Into my own parade, cast your dancin' spell my way  
I promise to go under it.

Indeed, even the names of rock groups reflected this mythic motif, most notably Jefferson Airplane which recently (keeping up with technological progress, I suppose), has changed itself into the Jefferson StarShip!

The image of the spaceship or, in other rock songs the airplane, is important, for it pictures the *goal* of the modern trip, a goal quite different from that of Tennyson's Victorian version of Ulysses. As the image suggests, the goal is "getting high."

I am aware that for many that phrase means only one thing: getting stoned on some drug. While I do not deny that this is one meaning in the current rock use of this image and of the trip itself, I suggest that such an interpretation is a narrow one. In the best of modern "trip" poems, escape from reality is

not the *goal* of the trip; it is merely the beginning, the beginning of a trip into oneself, into one's unconscious, into that mythic dimension that Carl Jung writes so movingly about in his *Autobiography*. The true goal, as I shall suggest, is an awakened image of the self, a new perspective brought back from the trip which can enable the traveller to become a better self, a self more aware of the areas of inner being impossible to explore in the anxiety-ridden and hypocritical politicized world of the late 60's.

And this, I'd like to point out, is not at all different from what is happening in the medieval poem "Thomas the Rhymer." The trip he takes to Faeryland and beyond is to encounter "visions." Moreover, his name—Thomas the Rhymer—patently reveals that he, too, like modern rock lyricists, is another manifestation of the archetypal POET. The journey is dangerous, of course, since it skirts heaven and hell to get to faeryland, but only through a dangerous voyage can true wisdom of the self ever be acquired.

Enough prolegomena. Let us look now at one example of a trip poem—or rather a series of related poems: *Sergeant Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Is this, as Vice President Agnew once warned us, an escape from reality, an avoidance of truth, a cop-out? Or does the poem discover reality through taking the trip?

As the background crowd noises and an orchestra tuning up suggest, the first song of *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* is taking us to a boisterous English music hall, the place where the lower classes go to forget their tedious work day. Applause greets the Beatles as they appear to introduce Sgt. Pepper's Band, and appreciative applause again interrupts the band when they sing:

It's wonderful to be here,  
It's certainly a thrill.  
You're such a lovely audience,  
We'd like to take you home with us.

The irony behind these commonplaces is that there *is* no audience! There is only the individual listener who has put the record on, probably, because he is lonely and, recalling Dylan's words, wants to be lifted out of that loneliness by taking "a trip upon your magic swirling' ship." It is, then, the experience of listening to the record with its imagined communion of singer and audience that will constitute the "trip."

A scream from the music hall audience announces the appearance of Ringo Starr, the most lovable Beatle but the one who is, by his own admission in the following song, most apt to sing out of tune. It is for this reason that, as our master of ceremonies tells us, "he wants you to sing along." And we do, joining the other three Beatles in the chorus:

I get by with a little help from my friends,  
I get high with a little help from my friends,  
Going to try with a little help from my friends.

Here, 'getting high' is not a narrowly conceived argot term suggesting a drug experience only, but a metaphor which embodies the poem's theme of human communion: the communion that comes from the other Beatles 'helping' Ringo, from the music hall audience 'helping' the Beatles, and from all of us lonely listeners who, by joining in, 'help' transcend the barriers of time and space separating us from each other.

The recurring phrase "I need somebody to love" in Ringo's song induces him to "turn out the light" in order to turn on his imagination and, thereby, escape loneliness. The next song of the album, "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," is the direct result of such imaginative "tripping."



Picture yourself in a boat on a river,  
With tangerine trees and marmalade skies  
Somebody calls you, you answer quite slowly,  
A girl with kaleidoscope eyes.  
Cellophane flowers of yellow and green,  
Towering over your head.  
Look for the girl with the sun in her eyes,  
And she's gone.

In its depiction of such an idealized landscape, this song reminds us of Coleridge's "trip" poem to Xanadu where, amidst a fertile and fantastic landscape, the poet encounters the Abyssinian maiden playing upon her dulcimer. Both poems, then, are versions of the archetypal "Voyage to Cytherea," a trip which Watteau illustrates so delicately in his famous painting. But there is an important difference between the Beatles' version and that of Coleridge. When the voyager returns in the earlier poem having "drunk the milk of Paradise," he finds himself unable to "revive within me/ Her symphony and song." In the Beatles' version, the visionary experience *can* be taken back into the real world because, in an important sense, we have never *left* that world. The flowers which tower over us are fantastically exaggerated but they are made of the same material in which our daily bread is wrapped: cellophane. The taxis which appear to take us home are made of "newspaper", and the porters in the railway station, although they sport "looking glass ties," are recognizable figures from our workaday world of commuting. The 'trip,' then, does not transcend reality, it transforms it. This becomes apparent when the voyager, returning from his 'trip' via subway, suddenly encounters "the girl with the sun in her eyes" right here in our ordinary world:

Suddenly someone is there at the turnstile,  
The girl with the kaleidoscope eyes.

The value of such "tripping" is that it allows us to see the marvelous which is *always* around us—if we can develop the sensitive vision to perceive it.

The next song, "Getting Better," is about just that. Previously the singer has been driven to "hiding me head in the sand" and acting cruel to his woman because society, as imaged in his school teachers, kept "holding me down." But "I'm changing my scene" now "since you've been mine." Ostensibly, this is a love song, but, as the theatrical image and the persistence of the spatial imagery distinguishing staying down from "getting high" imply, it is also about the need for vision, for the transforming power of the imagination. The next song, moreover, tells us how to resist letting the ugliness and insensitivity of the real world "get you down."

I'm fixing a hole where the rain gets in  
And stops my mind from wandering  
Where it will go.

As in Feste's sad song from *Twelfth Night*, the image of rain serves here to remind us of the harshness of reality unrelieved by imagination and fun. It is dramatized by people "who disagree and never win" and yet who wonder "why they don't get in my door." The reason is the poet-singer must carefully garner and conserve his imagination, allowing it to wander (or trip) "where it will go." To encourage and stimulate this spiritual activity, the singer paints "my room in the colourful way." "Fixing a hole" and "filling the cracks," then, are modes resisting a world which places little value on spiritual travel.

For the Beatles as for Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Blake, such travel is not merely an aesthetic pleasure, it is the moral activity which alone allows us to “get better.”

This is something which the ordinary, working-class world does not understand, however, and the following song, “She’s Leaving Home,” dramatizes the conflict between the values of that world and the free and better one which young people desperately imagine. The scenario is familiar to everyone aware of the generation gap which developed so rapidly in the 60’s: the young person, feeling stifled by the expectations of her parents, leaves a note trying to explain why she is going to meet “a man from the motor trade.” Her mother’s response, “We gave her everything money could buy,” allows the Beatles the opportunity to put down the materialism of the girl’s parents, but they resist such a one-sided explanation. Instead, they present both sides antiphonally in a kind of counterpoint against a background of soap-opera string music. Since such music is appropriate to the parents’ generation, it suggests the pathos of *their* point of view while, at the same time, implying that their attitudes are out of date and self-serving:

She (We gave her most of our lives)  
is leaving (Sacrificed most of our lives)  
home (We gave her everything money could buy)

As the last lines of the song suggest, the daughter’s reasons for leaving home to take her ‘trip’ have little to do with materialistic values. Instead, it was “Something inside that was always denied/ For so many years.”

The last song on this side of the album returns us, with its jaunty music-hall bounce, back to the theatres where we began our musical ‘trip.’ “Being for the Benefit of Mr. Kite” celebrates that most child-delighting place of illusion: the circus. Here, marvels will be seen. Mr. K. “will challenge the world” by leaping through a “hogshead of real fire!”, and, “of course Henry the Horse dances the waltz!” As the martial tempo of the music suddenly becomes that of a waltz played on a carousel we perceive how this song unifies a theme running throughout part 1 of the album. Just as physical feats defying “reality” are possible only in the illusion-making world of the circus, so the power of our imagination to transcend reality is possible only in the world of art, a world where Henry the Horse appears through the musical magic of the Beatles. The distance between our care-ridden adult life and our careless childhood has been instantly erased and we enjoy, while the song lasts, the world of marvels once more.

It is the division between parts of ourselves as well as the distance which separates us from others that constitutes the theme of George Harrison’s song “Within You Without You,” the initial one for part 2 of the album. Here is the thematic core for the whole of *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*. Simply and without the irony of double entendre pervading the songs of part 1, against an insinuating, hypnotic background of sitar and tabla, Harrison points to the cause of our loneliness:

We were talking—about the space between us all  
And the people—who hide themselves behind a wall of illusion.

In these words, the meaning of “reality” is radically redefined. Those people who “hide themselves behind a wall of illusion” include the parents of the girl who leaves home. Mistakenly, they assumed that by “sacrificing most of our lives” to give her “everything that money could buy,” they were providing the real values she needed. As they ruefully discover in the poem, however, “Fun is the one thing that money can’t buy.” It is real estate which is illusory. Or, as Harrison sings, “Try to realise it’s all within yourself . . . we’re all one, and life flows on within you *and* without you.” (*italics mine*) By themselves, such sentiments sound banal; within the context of the complete ‘trip’ into self-awareness which is *Sgt. Pepper’s*

*Lonely Hearts Club Band*, however, they point toward a monistic view of reality which is essential, we assume, if we are ever to participate in “the love we all could share.”

Sharing love is the topic of the next two poems also, but, love in the comic not the cosmic mode. To the accompaniment of a goofy clarinet which captures the flavor of 30’s dance music, the singer asks plaintively “Will you still be sending me a Valentine/ Birthday greetings bottle of wine. . . When I’m sixty-four.” He proceeds to catalogue the whole list of clichés about the obligations of married love to his (we suppose) wife until the last lines of the poem suddenly reveal his real situation:

Send me a postcard, drop me a line,  
Stating point of view  
Indicate precisely what you mean to say  
Yours sincerely, wasting away  
Give me your answer, fill in a form  
Mine for evermore

The ‘you’ of the poem we painfully perceive here is not his faithful wife at all; she is, instead, the figment of a lonely man’s imagination as he writes a lonely-hearts newspaper advertisement desperately trying, through the only language he knows—the trite and sentimental rhetoric of the Tin Pan Alley pop song—to find someone to share his love.

The singer of the next lyric is also looking for love—and he finds it—but in a most unlikely person: “Lovely Rita meter maid.” He falls in love as he watches her standing before expired parking meters filling in her little white tickets. Like the persona of the previous song, his address to the young lady is full of attempts at wit which fall into bathos (“Nothing can come between us,/ When it gets dark I tow your heart away”), but we do not laugh at him. Instead we see a bit of ourselves in his awkward attempt to connect with the young lady. And we admire his ability to find his lady not in the sky with diamonds but in the real world of parking meters and jealous sisters who insist on sitting with the would-be lovers on the sofa.

The next song, “Good Morning, Good Morning,” brings us even further down into a nitty-gritty reality. From the mystical experience of cosmic love in “Within You, Without You” to the fantasy bride of “When I’m Sixty-Four” imagined in a wonderland of domestic happiness to “lovely Rita” pictured on the city streets we have been descending back into a world untransformed by the vision of a love which can overcome our loneliness. Here we enter the fragmented, competitive, workaday world where there’s “Nothing to do to save his life call his wife in/ Nothing to say but what a day how’s your boy been/ Nothing to do . . .” Despite this negative environment and the fact that he’s “got nothing to say,” the singer bravely repeats a cheerful “Good morning, good morning” to the bleak world around him.

The ironic discrepancy between the jaunty rhythm of this song and its depressing depiction of contemporary society is continued in the reprise of the title song of the album. Despite its return to the cheery atmosphere of the music hall where our trip began, emphasis shifts from our earlier communion in helping Ringo sing his song to something else:

We’re sorry but it’s time to go.  
Sergeant Pepper’s lonely,  
Sergeant Pepper’s lonely,  
Sergeant Pepper’s lonely,  
Sergeant Pepper’s lonely  
Sergeant Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band.



In returning us to our original isolation as we listen to the record we are reminded that the whole trip has been an illusion; we are still alone. Only through imagination have we travelled anywhere, communed with anyone.

The album might have ended here, but it continues into a kind of epilogue which recapitulates the entire trip. In “A Day in the Life” we hear of “a lucky man who made the grade” in terms of society’s standard of success but whose violent act of suicide, the complete repudiation of selfhood, reveals the spiritual bankruptcy of such success.

And though the news was rather sad  
Well I just had to laugh  
I saw the photograph.  
He blew his mind out in a car  
He didn’t notice that the lights had changed  
A crowd of people stood and stared  
They’d seen his face before  
Nobody was really sure  
If he was from the House of Lords.

The crowd’s inability to recognize the victim except as some face it may have seen in the newspaper suggests the enormous gulf which isolates man from man. Although the victim’s terrified flight from his self might be that of any member of the crowd who really *thought* about the fragmentation of contemporary culture and the isolation it creates in each of us, none of the crowd recognizes his own face in that of the suicide. These are the “hollow men” of Eliot’s poem. And Eliot is not inappropriate to mention here in view of this poem’s final image:

I read the news today oh boy  
Four thousand holes in Blackburn, Lancashire  
And though the holes were rather small  
They had to count them all  
Now they know how many holes it takes  
To fill the Albert Hall.

Truth is always stranger than fiction; it is a fact (as reported in the newspapers) that Scotland Yard did indeed sink that many holes on a moor in searching for human bodies buried by a mass murderer. What horrifies the listener, however, is not so much this grisly detail but the connection made between the four thousand holes stinking with the odor of decomposing bodies and the four thousand persons making up the audience for a musical performance in Albert Hall. Are they the “lovely audience” the Beatles wanted to take home with them in the first song? The possible metaphoric connection between these holes is too much for the persona of the song to take and so, at the interjected phrase “I’d love to turn you on,” the Beatles create a musical “takeoff” that sounds much like that of an airplane. In terms of the structure of the album, this musical “takeoff” serves as a metaphor for the “trip” the Beatles have been taking us on, a trip away from the despiritualized wasteland of contemporary society into a vision of how the world *might* be if we only understood how to connect the life and love flowing within us to that same life and love flowing through those who are without us. The repeated phrase, “I’d love to turn you on,” indeed suggests all of the themes implied in the “trip” which is the total experience of the album. And the key word is love.

I hope my commentary, scattered as it has been, allows us to see that the poems in *Sgt. Pepper’s* and



the trip we take through them is *not* an escape from reality so much as it is a heightening of it. All the problems that bother us appear here—generational conflict, drudgery of routine jobs, getting old, suicide—and the awful reality they bear is *not* avoided. Moreover, the “Enemy” is not turned into a monster. The parents of the girl leaving home are given an equal voice in the singing of the song, and the sad violin music dating from the 40’s is a tribute to the style of music they would want to hear. The enemy, then, is no dragon such as that which St. George encounters in his voyage into the wasteland. The enemy is ourselves: our petty, purposeless, untransformed selves.

What possible solution can the Beatles offer for this? Perhaps solution is the wrong word; experience would be a better one, for ultimately all that the Beatles *can* offer—all that any artist can offer us—is himself: that is, his art. As I pointed out, the opening of the album recreates the inside of a theatre, a performance, a show. The entire trip, then, has been an illusion of art, just as any stage play is an illusion. What the Beatles realized that they had to offer was *not* political solutions, *not* some philosophy, but the *experience* that their musical art alone could give, an artistry that has taken us on a trip into ourselves, our pains, our dreams. And this, it seems to me, is at the core of the rock myth. In all rock versions of the trip, the voyage we are taken on, *music* has been the common denominator. In the various fantastic voyages of rock music whether with Pink Floyd, Joni Mitchell, or the Beatles, the ultimate boon that is brought back from the other land we visit is our experience of the music and the words themselves. THAT’S the trip. And it *is* a true marvel of the sort we expect the hero to bring back to us as Gawain brings back the green girdle from his voyage, because it *does* transcend the ugly realities that many listeners live in. Moreover, as the Beatles say when they sing “I want to turn you on,” it is the musical experience that can *transform* this ugly reality into something manageable, livable. It is only after the trip to the Sky with Lucy that the voyager can look at the ordinary girl at the turnstile and see that she *too* is extraordinary, part of the trip he’s just been on. The transformation of ordinary reality through the experience of the dream-voyage, then, is the boon at the center of the modern mythic version.

It is time now to draw my remarks to a close and, hopefully, connect these remarks with our subject: myth. The evidence from the lyrics I’ve examined points me toward an underlying myth in the music of the last decade. This myth incorporates for me many of the aspects of contemporary rock I’ve been looking at. Oddly enough, this myth is one of the oldest around. I refer to the myth of Orpheus. This myth has held the imagination of various cultures from before Ovid’s era down through the Renaissance which set the story to music in both of its first attempts to create musical drama, or opera. It is a myth, moreover, which continues to haunt us to this day as the lovely film made in Brazil called *Black Orfeo* amply demonstrates. In this story, as most of you know, the lyre-player—or guitarist—possesses extraordinary gifts. His music moves men to tears; trees and animals are struck dumb and come to stand around him as he plays. So great is the power of his music that even Hell relents when he plays for them to win back his bride Eurydice. Orpheus, then, is our archetype of the poet, the mover of our hearts, the mover of our imaginations, the creator of the dreams we live by. In this sense, he is our mythmaker—the original.

As my remarks I hope have shown, the rock musician has, at times, been ALL these things to the last generation of young people in our culture.

The story of Orpheus, however, does not leave him triumphant. It does not stop with his successful playing despite the miracle of his sound. Instead, it ends another way. Here is Ovid’s account from Book XI as translated by Rolfe Humphries:

So with his singing Orpheus drew the trees,  
The beasts, the stones, to follow, when, behold!

The mad Ciconian women, fleeces flung  
 Across their maddened breasts, caught sight of him  
 From a near hill-top, as he joined his song  
 To the lyre's music. One of them, her tresses  
 Streaming in the light air, cried out: "Look there!  
 There is our despiser!" and she flung a spear  
 Straight at the singing mouth, but the leafy wand  
 Made only a mark and did no harm. Another  
 Let fly a stone, which, even as it flew,  
 Was conquered by the sweet harmonious music,  
 Fell at his feet, as if to ask for pardon.  
 But still the warfare raged, there was no limit,  
 Mad fury reigned, and even so, all weapons  
 Would have been softened by the singer's music,  
 But there was other orchestration: flutes  
 Shrilling, and trumpets braying loud, and drums,  
 Beating of breasts, and howling, so the lyre  
 Was overcome, and then at last the stones  
 Reddened with blood, the blood of the singer, heard  
 No more through all that outcry.

Does real life mirror myth? Or is it the other way around? I am not sure, but we do know that, coming to the end of the highpoint of modern rock in the period 1969-71 a number of odd coincidences can be noted. First Jimi Hendrix, archetype of the musician as priest, died of an overdose of drugs. Then, it was Jim Morrison, the angry young man of the Doors. And, after that, the white blues singer who wailed the anguish of the younger generation, Janis Joplin. Does the mythic stoning of the poet Orpheus dictate such a conclusion to the story?

I do sense, however, that we are drawing to an end of that era, whether we regard these singer-Orpheuses as our scapegoat victims or not. Music has begun to turn away from its earlier preoccupations. Look at the titles of recent song hits: "Listen to a Country Song" by Loggins and Messina, or "Country Road, Take Me Home" by John Denver. Perhaps we are at the dawning of a new myth, the one about returning to the land. You remember that one: it's what Vergil wrote about in the *Georgics* and that the 18th century pastoral poets wrote about when they wanted to retire from London. But that is a myth for another day.

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## SOME REFLECTIONS ON "BEASTS, ANONYMITY, AND MEN"

by

*Richard M. Morton*

*(English)*

I'm afraid that what I shall have to say here will be all but incoherent to anyone who missed my "hour"—and perhaps even those who were with me that lovely, soft afternoon last fall will be able to make little sense of it; but I have thought it over and have decided that this is, if not the best, at least the most honest course open to me. I never got it said, anyway, what I had hoped to get said that warm afternoon, with the sun outside so lovely and still and all of us there in the room and me with the opportunity to say what I wanted. Some of you who were there might remember that I read a few poems, a passage from a working manuscript of a book—I had hoped that some idea about the state of being an American might materialize and, by indirection, some idea about myth, because to me America is the richest country for myth on earth. Like all lands everywhere on this globe it was astir with beasts before men came, with a life that man did not make, but found and then set himself to dream about, just because he had suddenly the faculty of finding and had become a fashioner as well as something fashioned. But America, this hemisphere and so our continent as part of it, has been this more recently than most places and I think the wound from the original encounter with that peculiar fate is fresher, more immediately felt here. But I am an American after all and my feeling may be simply explained by that.

Still it seems that, when he became a fashioner, among those things that man began to make was myth—how he made it, to what ends of explanation or worship or entertainment or what it symbolizes about himself that he did make myths or does make them, I can scarcely hope to answer here—or anywhere, anytime. But I will venture to say that myth and some concept of the Past are joined—and more, it seems to me that myth, perhaps because it is inextricably bound up with what we call the Past, is a link as well to what we call the future. For in a way much of what we call myth is formulated in bodies of dead cultures and yet it still lives and when we take it into our minds, put it into our mouths, we touch two ways in time: it may be possible to feel the strange configuration of a Greek thought, a hint or ghost of it, on a warm fall afternoon no later than last fall here in Greensboro—and you will not be made a Greek who touch this alien, different perspective, yet you will be changed, as present and, I believe, future consciousness is and will be changed by this odd and, I also believe, sometimes chilling, encounter with the differentiation of man. The ancient Greeks are not our contemporaries, as the Elizabethan English are not, and the ancient Egyptians and Sumerians are not. They are our forbears and it is we who are the repository of what is timeless in them, as those to come after us will be to us. And this is not static, it is not an aggregation that elongates and stiffens behind the current moment of culture, reducing that moment to a narrowing little kind of "life" or an increasing solidification of dead bone, "life" becoming more enfeebled against an inevitable attrition.

And I realize, writing this, that the great challenge to consciousness in the present is to maintain its spring, its sense that it is going forward, that the future is a possibility. I realize, too, that the working title of the book I read from, "When in the Course. . . ," pivots on change, and the abbreviated episode I read from, spoken by a reflective sort of human named Robert J. Arden, is a partial portrait of a man trying to grasp the unpredictable and always almost lost moments of his own coming into being—if you will, of the moment of change. A good many of the presentations on myth either predicted change or made an appeal for change and almost all of them, therefore, premised something about the past, the lost, the resurrectible. The Past is in a sense a memory and the Great or Collective Past is not always "personal," yet men can do little for them-

selves or others if it does not touch them in a personal way. Everything transpires or dies with the individual and I believe that it is the dignity and integrity of the individual memory that it not convey or surrender a man ultimately to any element other than the state of his present being; for it is in that being that he must know the humility that everything and anything can happen and that only the individual can truly realize the “new” way to be. Only the individual can hold the human obligation to the dream, which is the dim, elusive past of the race—and by the race I mean human kind—simultaneously with the vision, which is the bright and ineluctable future and shares instantly, at any moment of the present, the possibility of being lost to oblivion.

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## A BICENTENNIAL LOOK AT THE EQUALITY MYTH

by

*Frederick W. Parkhurst, Jr.*

*(Economics)*

Recently I picked up on the table opposite the Dean's Office in Archdale Hall a pamphlet published by the American Revolution Bicentennial Administration (labeled GPO: 1975 o-596-054) with the title "Questions and Answers About the Bicentennial." I have ascertained that the availability of this pamphlet on our campus is through the courtesy of our local Bicentennial representative, Alex Stoesen, who as you know is chairman of our History Department, and we may therefore regard his distribution of this item as an authoritative endorsement. In response to the very first question—"What is the Bicentennial?"—this pamphlet responds that

"It is a celebration of our roots, detailed in the three great documents upon which the hopes, the aspirations, and the future of our country rest: The Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights."

The distinguishing characteristic of these three documents is the myth of equality. Certainly, Abraham Lincoln thought so in his 1863 Gettysburg Address:

"Fourscore and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal."

In his original draft of the Declaration of Independence, Thomas Jefferson wrote:

"We hold these truths to be sacred and undeniable, that all men are created equal and independent, that from that equal creation they derive rights inherent and inalienable, among which are the preservation of life, and liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

As the Declaration was finally approved, it read:

"We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these, are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

Thus, on July 4, 1776, the Declaration of Independence proclaimed all men equal. Likewise, according to the United States Constitution, Article XIV, Section 1,

"No state shall deny to any citizen within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws."

The Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the United Nations on December 10, 1948, has as its Article One:

"All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights."

Of course, the myth of equality did not begin with the Declaration of Independence, nor does it end with the Declaration of Human Rights. The equality myth is at least as old as the Bible. A certain degree of social equality is found in I CORINTHIANS 1:26 (I am quoting from the recently published *The Living Bible*):

“Notice among yourselves, dear brothers, that few of you who follow Christ have big names or power or wealth.”

In COLOSSIANS 3:11 we find:

“In this new life one’s nationality or race or education or social position is unimportant; such things mean nothing. Whether a person has Christ is what matters, and he is equally available to all.”

In GALATIANS 4:28, we have another expression of equality:

“We are no longer Jews or Greeks or slaves or free men or even merely men or women, but we are all the same—we are Christians; we are one in Christ Jesus.”

This long tradition of equality is nicely reflected in the history of the Religious Society of Friends. Quakers are known for the practice of the priesthood of all believers, both men and women enjoying equal status in the life of the Meeting. Friends have been active from the founding of the Society in seeking equality for all persons irrespective of sex, race, nationality, creed, or condition. This is seen in the North Carolina Yearly Meeting of Friends’ 1975 printing of “Faith and Practice: Book of Discipline,” Query no. 10 at page 52, concerning Attitudes in Race Relations:

“Does your attitude toward people of other races indicate your belief in their right to equal opportunity? Do you believe in the spiritual capacity of men of all races and do you recognize their equality in the sight of God? Are you aware of your responsibility as a Christian to help in the elimination of racial discrimination and prejudice?”

Also in the same 1975 printing, at page 42, is a discussion of *Interracial Relations* concerning the Quaker:

“Testimony Against Race Prejudice. The conception of ‘That of God in every one’ makes it impossible for Friends to draw lines of distinction in capacity or privilege between different races or nations. It is the concern of Friends that white peoples, Indians, Negroes, Orientals, and all other peoples may share equally in the heritage of justice, freedom, and brotherly love, which is their inalienable right. ‘For God hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on the face of the earth.’ (Acts 17:26). Friends believe that any racial discrimination whether by legal enactment or by cultural or economic practices, is essentially a violation of His law of love.”

Of course, it is not just Quakers who believe in equality. Every good American believes in equality. Inequality is un-American. The motto of the American legal system is “Equal Justice Under Law.” The United States Supreme Court has adjudicated equality time and time again, from the jury room (*Norris v. Alabama*, 1935; *Hernandez v. Texas*, 1954; *Peters v. Kiff*, 1972), to the political district (*Baker v. Carr*, 1962; *Wesberry v. Sanders*, 1964; *Reynolds v. Sims*, 1964), to the school house. The 1954 decision in *Brown v. Board of Education* is just one illustration of the powerful influence of the myth of equality. Every socially acceptable Fourth of July oration is permeated with the rhetoric of equal rights, equality of opportunity, equal treatment. One of the most popular novels ever published in the United States was *Looking Backward 2000-1887*, Edward Bellamy’s utopia where everyone enjoyed an equal income. It is scarcely necessary, then, to belabor the point that we have equality in our mouths, but—as witness the visceral response to busing—we have inequality in our marrow.

Obviously, the idea of equality is a myth; that is, we care not to admit the fact of inequality and pretend

that there is equality. The myth is useful. The pretense of equality has been extraordinarily productive in social life. The myth of equality has broken down the caste system, abolished slavery, and not only offered at public expense but compelled an education for every child, regardless of that child's capacity for learning. The myth of equality has given us an expanded electorate; despite the fact that some people are more intelligent and better informed and vote more carefully—we each get one vote, no more. The myth of equality has given us a general system of social security, even though some retired persons are more deserving and others are independently wealthy; don't get me wrong on this, please—I'm in favor of social security, and think it ought to be expanded. You see, I'm a "victim" of the myth of equality!

The myth of equality has energized the business climate. Anti-monopoly attitudes have encouraged the activities of individual entrepreneurs. The myth of equality says anyone can be a success, and we are willing to say so in the words of Emma Lazarus at the base of the Statue of Liberty:

"Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame,  
With conquering limbs astride from land to land,  
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand  
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame  
Is the imprisoned lightening, and her name  
Mother of Exiles. From her beacon hand  
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes command  
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame.  
'Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!' cries she  
With silent lips. 'Give me your tired, your poor,  
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,  
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.  
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,  
I lift my lamp beside the golden door.'"

Here we have in eloquent poetry the American myth of equality. It has sustained us not only for our domestic policy of social progress, but it has given us a rationale for extending the idea of democracy in international relations. The myth of equality helped supply the enthusiasm necessary to move against the elitist doctrines of Mussolini, Tojo, and Hitler, whose fascist philosophy was uniquely contrary to the egalitarian myth. In the past couple of decades those of us who have opposed current American foreign policy have done so by appealing to the myth of equality. After all, when we objected to—and still object to—"corrupt right-wing military dictatorships" which the U. S. government was, and is, supporting around the globe, whether in Africa, Asia, or South America, or in Europe for that matter, such as American support for the Franco-Falangist regime, when we oppose the activities around the world of the C. I. A. or of the C. I. A. - F. B. I. at home, we are appealing to the myth that all men are equally capable of governing themselves.

This, of course, is obvious nonsense. No sensible person can really believe that "The law must, or should, treat everyone equally." As an example, take age. The law does not, and it should not, treat all persons as equals regardless of age. There are legal infants and legal adults, and the two are treated differently. There are certain minimum ages for obtaining a driver's license, or for a marriage license, or for compulsory school attendance. To be specific, in North Carolina, one must be age 18 to be eligible to vote, age 21 to be eligible for public office, and under the U. S. Constitution age 25 to be elected to the House of Representatives, age 30 to be elected to the United States Senate, and age 35 to be elected President.

At age 65 one becomes eligible for income tax benefits and social security, as well as special allowances on



the sale and purchase of a home. Some states set age 21 as the age of adulthood; North Carolina has reduced this to age 18, and any state can set whatever age it desires as to the use of alcoholic beverages. The age of marriage varies from state to state, and often according to sex. Thus, it is common that females may marry at an earlier age than males. There are, in fact, all kinds of inequalities based upon distinctions as to sex, and it is these inequalities which have stirred up interest in the proposed E. R. A.—Equal Rights Amendment—which would change the Constitution of the United States so as to eliminate legal distinctions based upon sex. It is this effort which I wish to refer to a bit later in this presentation. For the moment let me note that both our law and our economics are founded upon the myth of equality. Both the Declaration of Independence and Adam Smith's *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* were published in the year 1776.

Thomas Jefferson's myth of equality said that every man was equal before the law. This is a convenient, a benevolent, myth. It is like what we call in the law a conclusive, absolute, "irrebuttable presumption." An "irrebuttable presumption" is a rule of law which cannot be overcome by evidence to the contrary. No proof, no matter how strong it may be, will be permitted to overturn an "irrebuttable presumption." It makes no difference that the facts are otherwise. An example of an "irrebuttable presumption" is the rule of law which says:

"The mother's husband is the child's father."

Now, we may very well know that the father was lost on a desert island for the past twelve months, or in jail, or in the army—which is much the same, if I may be allowed my prejudice on this point; but he is still the child's father. Some of us would say, with Charles Dickens in *Oliver Twist*,

"If the law supposes that," said Mr. Bumble, "the law is a ass, a idiot."

But such an "irrebuttable presumption" is a convenient rule of law to protect the child's interests in being legitimate, or for inheritance, or for a number of other purposes in family law which are designed to avoid legal problems and the disruption which might come about otherwise. There are, of course, "rebuttable presumptions," such as that it is presumed in a simultaneous death where there is no evidence to the contrary that the husband lived longer than the wife. In this kind of a presumption, evidence may be introduced to show that the wife did in fact live longer. Another illustration of a "rebuttable presumption" is that after being missing for seven years a person may be presumed dead. This kind of presumption is very easily overcome if the so-called "dead" person is rescued from the desert island or recovers from his amnesia. It is a useful presumption, however, since it allows the spouse to remarry without danger of committing a crime; the first marriage is cancelled by a legal declaration of presumed death.

But the myth of equality is like the "irrebuttable presumption." No evidence to the contrary will be permitted to show that you are not entitled to equal protection of the laws when it comes to race. Under our Constitution there can be no proof of facts acceptable to a court of law attempting to establish differences according to race. Even if, like the man who had been in jail for a year or so prior to the child's birth, the facts seem to indicate otherwise, this is not to be considered in dealing with the situation. Even if it were established scientifically that I. Q.'s differ according to race, there is an "irrebuttable presumption" that races are equal. This is certainly a myth firmly embedded in our legal thinking. It is a myth of which I approve. It would make no difference to me that I. Q.'s were genetically determined according to race, just as it makes no difference to me—as to legal equality—that in fact I. Q.'s vary within races.

Yet I think it is very interesting that we, most of us, don't want to even hear about the possibility. Scientific research into potential racial I. Q. differences is a taboo subject. The very suggestion of it constitutes an



insult. It is embarrassing to contemplate the idea. We hear no pleas here for discovering the truth. We don't want the truth. We don't favor pure research into such a subject. We fear the consequences. We don't know and we don't want to know. We ask, what good would it accomplish? Yet we don't ask such a question when we conduct laboratory experiments in chemistry, physics, or astronomy. It is when we get involved with people that such questions arise. We are sensitive to their sensitivities. To quote Christopher Marlowe: "Comparisons are odious." It is psychologically abhorrent to us to even imagine that there are I.Q. differences according to race. The whole concept is so contrary to our myth of equality that we regard any such discussion as a social obscenity.

Equality is also a myth firmly established in our economic thinking, and one that Adam Smith's treatise of 1776 argued very persuasively. Adam Smith said that each person was equally capable of being his own King, to make his own decisions in the market place, and that government's job was to guarantee that equality by being a policeman. The consumer, the landowner, the businessman, the investor, the worker, each of us are guided by our own economic enlightened self-interest to serve not only ourselves but the community. A merchant will not be dishonest because he would lose his customers; as Adam Smith wrote:

"Every individual endeavors to employ his capital so that its produce may be of greatest value. He generally neither intends to promote the public interest, nor knows how much he is promoting it. He intends only his own security, only his own gain. And he is led in this by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of society more effectively than when he really intends to promote it."

Thus, the myth of the invisible hand is a myth of equality, that the worker can really bargain on terms of equality with the employer to get the fair market value of his labor, that consumers will not be taken advantage of by the competitive businessman, and that the economic system tends to be self-regulating without intervention by government. Anyone who believes this myth has failed to read the history of the industrial revolution, has never heard of Ralph Nader, and has clearly never learned economics with Professor Parkhurst!

This myth of equal economic opportunity pervades our thinking and often prejudices us against government action to correct the evils of our society today. Only if there is no inheritance of wealth can there be equality of economic opportunity. The social reality is that the richest 5% of the population in the United States today owns 50% of the nation's wealth. There is no such thing as economic equality. It is true, of course, that equality of opportunity may not conclude with an equality of result—I suspect, because of human inequality, that it would not do so—but I do believe there would be much less inequality in the distribution of wealth and income. One thing that is missing here is the opportunity to be equal. At the moment, you must be clever enough to choose wealthy parents when you are born.

At birth, are we equal? Much as I admire Thomas Jefferson's myth, as a fact we are not equal. We are not equal physically. We are not equal in brainpower. We are not equal emotionally. We are all different. We are all unique. We are not the same. We are not equal. We do not equally possess health, strength, talent, ambition, pleasing personalities, mental capacity, or the multitude of other attributes which may be applied to human beings. Yet we want to treat people as equally as possible, as a matter of law, and in terms of economic opportunity. As a society we have the myth of equality because of our religious heritage and because it makes it much easier to live together. It makes life less complicated. If we admitted that some people are better qualified to vote than others, we would have to figure out some way to give them multiple votes. This would really complicate our elections, so we say we're all equal.

For the most part, this myth of equality has produced humanitarian consequences. It has given us social progress. We are happier for it. But now we are faced with a very serious proposal to add to our federal Constitution, a requirement that men and women, males and females, are equal. Now we all know this simply isn't true. Men cannot become pregnant, give childbirth, and nurse babies. This is a fact of nature. The United States Supreme Court has ruled that the provision of equal protection of the laws in our Constitution permits distinctions on the basis of sex. If there is a rational justification for the difference, a law which makes distinctions between men and women is Constitutional. But now the myth of equality is to be extended to sex, absolutely, like an "irrebuttable presumption," by the proposed Equal Rights Amendment, which says:

"Equality of Rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex."

I think that laymen have enough sense, as shown by the November 4, 1975, referendum rejection of state E.R.A.'s in New York by more than 400,000 votes (57% or 1,700,000 voted no), and in New Jersey, to recognize the nonsense involved in putting this myth of equality into the Constitution. After all, it is one thing as a matter of social nicety to say we believe in equality, since this is only a myth, but to make it an absolute operational legal principle is going from the sublime to the ridiculous. Here the layman is much more practical than the practitioner, and the layman knows that equality on the basis of sex is going to cause a good amount of trouble. Women interviewed by the *Village Voice* in New York after the overwhelming rejection at the ballot box of E.R.A. said they didn't want to be treated equally; they wanted to be treated better than men. Quite clearly, if I may be permitted a pun,

"One woman's myth is another woman's poison."

When it was pointed out in these interviews that the state E.R.A. posed fewer problems than the proposed federal E.R.A., these women said they knew they wouldn't be drafted into the state militia, which is voluntary, but they thought that state approval of a local E.R.A. would signal to the other states considering ratification of the federal E.R.A. that women did approve of being drafted into the Army of the United States, and they didn't want to be drafted. The Congress now has the *power* to draft women into the Army, of course, but the E.R.A. would *require* women to be drafted along with the men. Furthermore, these women who were interviewed did not want equality within the family. They wanted the assurance that their husbands would continue to be required to provide the family with financial support. They also did not want equality in public facilities, such as toilets. They were not persuaded that a federal E.R.A. would benefit women. Thus, it turns out that women are more opposed to E.R.A. than are men, and in this regard it may well be that men know their self-interests.

A prominent person from Guilford College went to the state legislature in Raleigh to speak in favor of North Carolina's ratification of the E.R.A. This person was very proud to come from a Quaker tradition of equality between men and women. This person pointed out that Guilford College was the first co-educational college in the South, and that Friends have had no distinctions between males and females, and this person urged North Carolina legislators to vote for a federal E.R.A. But North Carolina did not ratify E.R.A. Apparently the legislature was not convinced that just because certain Quakers want co-educational colleges, all other persons in the country should also be required—by Constitutional Amendment—to attend co-educational colleges. Of the over 2,000 colleges and universities in the United States, only 200 or about 10% are not co-educational. There is opportunity aplenty to attend a co-educational college; why is it necessary to outlaw the 10% where persons who desire a single-sex college can attend? Why is it necessary to outlaw women's colleges? Why is it necessary to outlaw men's colleges? To do so is only to be doctrinaire in pursuing the myth of equality; laymen may have more sense.

Laymen are also rejecting the doctrinaire application of the myth of equality in the case of school busing (which was upheld 9-0 by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Swann v. Charlotte-Mecklenburg Board of Education*, 1971). Now, since I am a rather doctrinaire practitioner in both law and economics, my model being that of equality, I am in favor of school busing for that purpose. This, obviously, is not the layman's attitude, as shown from polls which indicate over 70%, closer to 80%, opposing busing to achieve integrated schools. But I am a captive of the equality myth; because I am for equality, I am for busing as the present alternative to achieve an integrated education. I think one of the major functions, in fact the primary function, of the public school system—why it should be tax supported and enjoy compulsory attendance—is to integrate the United States. As John Stoneburner noted in his myth lecture "Images of Paradise in the American Experience," public schools in the United States have promoted an American "civil religion," performing an indispensable role in shaping the national character. I regard this role to be desirably indispensable.

America is a nation of immigrants, from Europe and Africa and Asia. We are composed of a variety of languages, cultures, races, backgrounds, and religions. We have persons from Northern, Eastern, and Southern Europe, all of whom are different. We have red, white, black, brown, and yellow. In recent years we have refugees from Hungary, Cuba, and Vietnam, each with their own peculiar experiences, very few of whom are familiar with life in our society. The nationhood of the United States depends upon a common language, a common culture, a common tradition of good citizenship, and it is the public school system which carries the responsibility for integrating these persons into our society. People must be able to communicate with each other, to share certain common values, and to appreciate the history and traditions of their adopted country. This does *not* mean that each American becomes completely homogenized in the old "melting-pot" idea; but neither can we remain "cafeteria-tray" isolated and ignorant of each other. The analogy is the "salad bowl," where we are each distinctive but have the common flavoring of whatever dressing we choose to apply to all. This is accomplished through the operation of the public schools, and therefore it is vital, in my judgment, that the public schools bring together as much as possible all of these different peoples so that each will appreciate the other and each acquires a common basis for life in the United States.

This means that, to the practitioner of the myth of equality, the talk about busing not achieving "quality education" is beside the point. The point is commonality. The layman is perfectly right when he says busing for integration, in itself, does not achieve quality education, if by "quality" we mean an immediate, or a short-run, or even a long-run, improvement in "the three R's." In fact, I have a strong suspicion that the quality of education is declining and that busing for integration is implicated in this decline. Busing for equality is probably—at least in the immediate future—contrary to quality education. The practitioner of the myth of equality sees busing not to achieve quality education but to carry out this abstract ideal of equality, to integrate the society, to bring each young person as much as possible into contact with other persons in the community, regardless of race, class, religion, national origin, or social condition.

The reality has always been to the contrary—this is part of the "American Dilemma" noted by Gunnar Myrdal—since we cannot compel all children to attend public schools. Private schools have been, and are increasingly, available to those who do not desire equality but who prefer quality, or, at least, non-conformity. While there may be no necessary conflict between quality and equality, there is a tendency for the two to diverge, and here is where the layman parts from the practitioner. The layman sees rather clearly that integrating the schools, black and white together, is often harmful to quality education and the layman—while still claiming to believe in the myth of equality—wants to achieve equality without the sacrifice of instructional content and, in reality, gives priority to (his perception of) "quality." The layman sees school disruption



tion; the layman sees falling standards; the layman sees higher taxes; and the layman is opposed to busing. The social reality is much more impressive to the layman than it is to the practitioner of the myth of equality. Practitioners of myths have more of a vested interest, more of a blindness, to continuing their models; laymen are more influenced by the social realities.

I do believe, however, that laymen are willing to treat people *as if* they were equal. Treating people *as if* they were equal is kind, loving, polite, courteous, and of course, hypocritical. We do it to preserve social intercourse and common decency—it makes us feel better. It makes life livable. It is a way of getting along with others. (We don't go around honestly commenting, "My, you're ugly!") We just pretend we are equal; it is a convenient myth. Actually, we know we are not equal. Secretly, we know we are superior to our inferiors, but we don't wish to say so out loud because then we should have to admit to being inferior to our superiors. Yet in our social practice, the reality is that we are constantly deciding superiority and inferiority. Some people are superior in physical appearance or personality or talent, and win beauty contests. Some people are superior in intelligence or aptitude or work habits, and win scholarships. Some people are superior in strength or agility or cleverness, and win athletic events such as in the Olympic Games. We like to say people are equal, but it is like the equality in George Orwell's *Animal Farm*:

"All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others."

As a practical matter, I suggest we keep the myth of equality. It is one of our great illusions. It has given us tremendous impetus toward the betterment of the human condition. Yet it is also dangerous, if we carry it too far. We must recognize that there are overwhelming inherited advantages to being born wealthy, or being born attractive, or being born with genius. We must recognize that there are often over-burdening inherited disadvantages to being born in an impoverished culture, to being born with physical or mental deficiencies, or to being born in one country as compared to another, or of one race as compared to another, or to being a member of a despised religion, political affiliation, or social group. To talk about equality in these circumstances is to echo the observation of Anatole France (quoted in Upton Sinclair's *The Cry For Justice*) that

"The law in its majestic equality forbids the rich as well as the poor to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets and to steal bread."

Again, as a practical matter, we must not be carried away with the myth of equality if in both law and economics it persuades us that we are all equally capable of success in life. This attitude tends to place the blame on the individual for failures resulting from economic conditions and social structures beyond the control of that individual. Compassion here requires that we look not to equality of treatment, or even equality of opportunity, but to equality of result. Instead of relying on the idea that everyone *is* equal, we can say that everyone *ought to be equal* as to certain minimum standards acceptable to all. We can guarantee by law not only that everyone ought to have "equality of opportunity," which in itself may not require equality of result, but that at the very least everyone should be provided with the opportunity to be equal—health services, education, training, maintaining a full employment economy, open institutions, free elections, democratic procedures—but we may wish to go beyond that and say that the least competent members of our society are entitled—to the extent that resources permit—to a minimum level of living (nutrition, shelter, and similar care) at public expense. We are willing to sacrifice a certain amount of efficiency in order to achieve a more loving society.

The other danger is that we carry the myth of equality beyond the minimum requirements of a decent society. Do we want to treat people equally or according to their condition? I cannot guarantee equal results to every student in my courses, and I should not guarantee even a minimum. A student ought to be entitled to earn an F. This gives greater meaning to the earned A, the earned B, the earned C, the earned D. It is also a



recognition of social reality that we are *not* all equal. There must be standards of competence. We need to avoid carrying this game of "let's pretend we're equal" beyond the boundaries of common decency into absurdity. We cannot take our pretensions of equality too seriously. If we really believed that we were all equal and practiced this belief, then the procedure for selecting students for Guilford College would do away with SAT scores and so on. We could eliminate a lot of staff. All we would require is a lottery machine to mix up all the applications as in the selection of jurors and choose students at random. This random-lottery chance-selection would treat everyone equally, and we could apply this to many other areas where we now make an attempt—as in the licensing of professionals—to determine qualifications and performance.

But we know that the social reality is a "normal curve" distribution. Most are in the middle; some are very high; and some are very low. The myth of equality is completely demolished when we consider the "normal curve." The "normal curve" applies to everything imaginable, shoe sizes, hat sizes, glove sizes. It applies to the distribution of grades, unless we have deliberately altered the distribution on the basis of the myth of equality. Some sentimentalists wish to do so. In some cases concerning inequalities in our society, it may be socially desirable to alter the "normal curve" so as to achieve humanitarian results. I believe this ought *not* to be done in the case of grades, since in this regard I place a higher value on integrity than on equality. However, I believe this can and ought to be done in the case of the distribution of wealth since I am not at all convinced that the present distribution is either natural or desirable but has probably arisen out of unjustifiable allocations of power in the past. Thus, a certain degree of discretion and judgment is indicated as when we ought to apply the myth of equality to our legal, social, and economic life.

That is why I do not believe that it is wise to extend this myth of equality to the point where we declare by Constitutional Amendment, as would be done by the E.R.A., that there ought not to be any legal distinctions between males and females. In private insurance rates, for example, the social reality is that women live about eight years longer than men and are therefore charged a higher rate for annuities and a lower rate for life insurance. I see no reason to require the rates to be equal when the expectation of loss is not equal. Only if private insurance is abolished in favor of social insurance would this be sensible public policy where we would be putting the myth of equality as superior to the social reality of differential risk. The same applies to automobile insurance where females, being safer drivers, get lower rates than males. This makes some sense to me, since as an economist one of my models is that a penalty for careless driving may persuade some careless drivers to operate vehicles more carefully. I think it is just as legitimate to do this by a group classification as it is to assess higher fire insurance rates on wooden buildings without sprinkler systems than on brick buildings with sprinkler systems. Aside from assigning the losses to the group where they occur—which may or may not conform to your concept of equity—the practice of doing so is based at least partially on the idea that this might provide an incentive to persuade the owners of wooden buildings to minimize economic loss by converting to brick or installing sprinkler systems.

Again, in the case of legal distinctions on the basis of sex I am persuaded that there is a rational justification for protective legislation for females which need not apply to males. In the famous 1908 "Brandeis Brief" case of *Muller v. Oregon*, the Supreme Court of the United States held that it was rationally justifiable, constitutionally legitimate, for a state to prohibit an employer from requiring a female employee to work more than 10 hours each day. Coming home late at night from work, a female is more likely than a male to be exposed to attack. Women are more likely to be raped than are men. Females are the mothers of the race and both they and their offspring need care, more than do men. These are just a few of the examples where courts have held that women can be given special treatment, but which the E.R.A. would change.

My objection to the E.R.A. is that it is a case of "overkill." To end reasonable distinctions on the basis of sex would, in my judgment, be more harmful than helpful. Rather than to change the Constitution by the

E.R.A., I think it would be clearly more prudent to eliminate unjust inequalities between men and women by specific legislation—local, state, and national—dealing on its own merits with that particular legal or social or economic injustice. Unlike the situation with regard to race (where equality cannot tolerate any distinctions or exceptions, and school busing is the only immediate alternative to guarantee equality), there are justifiable distinctions on the basis of sex—such as single-sex colleges, separate public facilities, and protective social legislation—and there are more reasonable alternatives than the E.R.A. Simply stated, the E.R.A. is not a sensible solution. I see no good reason to substantially disrupt the economic, social, and legal structure of the United States in order to correct those inequalities on the basis of sex which are a perceived injustice. For example, when I was an elected member of a local Board of Education (School Committee, as it is labeled in New England) in the City of Waltham, Massachusetts, back in the 1950's, it was my privilege to cast the deciding vote in favor of equal pay for men and women teachers. The city had a separate salary scale for men and women teachers, with a lower salary for women. I felt this was an unjust distinction and when I was a candidate for this public office I pledged "Equal pay for equal work." The campaign was successful, and the dual salary schedule was eliminated, and I see this as an illustration of constructive legislation for equality.

Finally, a word about words. Over the past few years there has been an effort to eliminate the word "man" from our language, so that we get "chairperson" to replace "chairman." There seems to be the thought that the word "man" refers only to maleness. Instead of saying the Lord's prayer as "Our Father, which art in Heaven," it will be "Our person, which art in Heaven," and "Thy Kingdom Come," will have to replace the word "King" with some neutrality. Sexless language will not only be very dull and silly, it will be a misconception as to the beauty of words. "Mankind" and similar words are very beautiful, much more so than "personkind" would be. Even the word "person" has the word "son" in it, which is male, so that I'm not sure how much of an improvement it is to say "person" even from the viewpoint of those who are attempting to purge the language. Some persons seem to think that the English language is a conspiracy against feminine figures of speech, but I do wish you to be aware that there is such a thing as "*lady*luck." To some denominations anyway, there is the "*mother* church"; and there is one's "*mother* tongue"; and—depending where you are from—either a *fatherland* or a *motherland*. Although there is a "*Father* Time," we do have "*Mother* Earth." A ship is a *she*, and she is launched on her *maiden* voyage; and "the engine's all right, so start *her* up." It is true, of course, that *she* may sail down "Old *Man* River," but somehow the river seems bi-sexual since we talk about rivers not as he but as *she*. Should we really try to get rid of all these sexual references in our language just to implement the myth of equality?

Let me close with some wisdom from the Bible. Perhaps the following bit of advice from the New Testament can be applied to this subject, and perhaps I should have declined to be included in this series on the basis of I TIMOTHY 4:7:

"Don't waste time arguing over foolish ideas and silly myths and legends. Spend your time and energy in the exercise of keeping spiritually fit."

# THE MYTH OF LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS THROUGH CHEMISTRY

*by*

*O. T. Benfey*

*(Chemistry)*

One of the myths enshrined in the United States Declaration of Independence is that Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness are our inalienable rights with which we are endowed by our Creator, and that our government is instituted to secure these rights for us all. That myth enunciated by Thomas Jefferson, is at least 200 years old. The myth of Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness through Chemistry, on the other hand, is closer to 2000 years old and is very much with us today, as I hope to show.

Yet life for many, in Thomas Hobbes' words, is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. It is not that life to which Jefferson calls us and in favor of which he justified revolution.

Liberty is circumscribed everywhere and all around us—by natural laws, that won't allow me to jump higher than 3 feet unaided or out of that window unhurt; human laws that won't allow me to cross an intersection by car if a patch of light facing me is red even if no one is within half a mile of me; economic laws that drastically limit my choices to what my assets and income prescribe, not to speak of my unpredictable neighbors, my uncertain health, my limited skills. Yet my dreams and wishes and desires and passions have no bounds—where then is liberty?

And the Pursuit of Happiness—that is the easiest right for any government to grant, for no guarantee of fulfillment, of attaining happiness itself is stated or implied. You may, under the U. S. Constitution, pursue happiness without hindrance, and reach no closer to it at age 80 than you were at 19. What contortions would the Supreme Court be going through if our government had promised happiness to its citizens rather than merely guaranteeing its pursuit.

Chemistry is a branch of knowledge, and a very deep one at that. It is not concerned with outward shape or form but with the innermost units, the tiniest parts of that whose properties we seek to understand.

In order to understand the nature of chemistry, Laurence Strong of Earham College once pointed to a certain analogy with bringing up children. Some parents are concerned with ensuring outward acceptable behavior—by instilling inhibitions as to what is not acceptable in public. Much harder is the task of nurturing the child from within so that out of its own inner nature it will want to and will behave in a socially harmonious and desirable way. It is the difference between a chest of drawers made of solid teak and one of teak veneer. Chemistry seeks to transform pine into teak. That is not a carpenter's task but that of a thinker, experimenter and seeker.

The founding fathers, Washington, Jefferson, Franklin, Benjamin Rush were profoundly practical people, interested in science, experiments and the useful and practical arts. They would not, I hope, consider my exploration today as sacrilege or as making fun of their high endeavors. My theme is that chemistry today and since its distant beginnings is closely, even indissolubly linked with life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

As NASA, the U. S. space program, was fading out, Charles C. Price, the Benjamin Franklin Professor of Chemistry at the University of Pennsylvania, former President of the American Chemical Society and a Quaker, sought for a new national goal to focus the scientific, technological and pioneering interests of our people. He sought for something equivalent to our achievement in putting a human being on the moon.



Professor Price's candidate for this new national focus was the synthesis of life, a task for which he felt we were prepared and ready to the same degree as America was before John F. Kennedy's 10-year moon-shot goal, or Spain was before Columbus set sail for the Indies and landed here—in America.

Our government chose a lesser yet closely related goal, the cure for cancer. Given the prevalent dread of cancer, how much would life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness be enhanced, were that dread disease conquered. Witness the opening comments at a Symposium on Cancer at the University of Wisconsin in 1936, forty years ago, by the University's President Glenn Frank:

"But not all these tragic consequences together are the worst evil wrought by cancer. For every *body* that is killed by the *fact* of cancer, multiplied thousands of *minds* are unnerved by the *fear* of cancer. What cancer, as an unsolved mystery, does to the morale of millions who may never know its ravages is incalculable. This is an incidence that cannot be reached by the physician's medicaments, the surgeon's knife, or any organized advice against panic. Nothing but the actual conquest of cancer itself will remove this sword that today hangs over our head."

"Nothing but the actual conquest of cancer itself will remove this sword"—what clearer statement can there be of a myth, a guiding belief, in chemistry as the clue to the enhancement of life. That myth is by no means a newly hatched one; it goes back to the very origins of that discipline, and the chemical search for liberation from the awful impediments circumscribing our human infirmities—the insights of religion.

Joseph Needham, biochemist of Cambridge, England, Fellow of the Royal Society, learned Chinese from some of his students, learned thus of Chinese contributions to science and technology, became during World War II British science attaché to the Chinese government and decided in his forties to devote the second half of his life to bringing the Chinese contributions of science and technology to the attention of the West. The first four volumes, in six parts, of his *Science and Civilization in China* are completed and the first chemistry volume, volume 5, part 2, has just appeared. It is a major contribution to our knowledge of alchemy. In fact, it was one of my students, Michael Wagner, in Humanistic Studies who pointed out to me its strange parallelism with the modern search for the conditions and mechanism of the origin of life on earth, the possibility of duplicating those conditions today, the search for the mechanism of aging and hence for a chemical cure for death itself.

Needham finds the origin of alchemy in reports from India of the remarkable effects produced by ingesting soma, the hallucinogenic fly agaric mushroom *amanita muscaria*. It is the mushroom depicted in my childhood books in Germany, the red, rounded cap with snowy-white spots on it. Soma, so the reports go, gave you a glimpse more or less extended, of what it must be like to live as gods—untrammelled by the force of gravity, the specter of death or all the infirmities man is heir to. To receive the ecstatic experience of happiness through something you eat—that was the electrifying news that spread over mountains and continents. And although soma had not produced immortals, simply the brief feeling, the possibility of immortality, there arose the hope that something else ingested might make the transformation permanent, might transcend mortality.

The reports, suggests Needham, would have made a particularly powerful impact in China where the reigning religious view did not include an afterlife so that, in contrast to Christianity, an avoidance of death was devoutly to be wished.

How then was one to go about finding a food more potent, more life-giving, than the red-topped mushroom? Here there was not yet a research program, only a vague hope that some explorer would hit on the true fruit of immortality. Needham proposes a very plausible candidate for the missing component in explaining the ori-



gins of alchemy: a liturgical component, the burning of incense in Taoist services. The incense burner, Needham suggests, is the prototype of the alchemist's crucible. Burning incense smells good, some forms clear or soothe the mind and if approached reverently may calm the body also. The smoke kept some insects away and some forms of incense were recognized as the first insecticides and fumigants. A research program was here at last: try anything and everything, of plant, animal or mineral origin, separately or mixed, heat in the burner and observe the results. Thus gunpowder was discovered in the ninth century, and the Taoist alchemists cautioned their followers never to mix sulfur, charcoal and saltpeter (potassium nitrate), because it was a mixture of death, not of life. Thereby gunpowder became known. In spite of that other myth about the Chinese being so peaceful that they only used gunpowder for fireworks, Chinese warlords used it for warfare within a century.

One other tradition feeds into alchemy, the metallurgists' magical transformation of powdery earths and rocks into the magnificence of metals by subjecting them to the flames of charcoal fires. These transformations were opposite to those normally encountered, those of decay, of rusting and spoilage. Instead something more perfect, more lasting was produced, engendered by the judicious manipulations of mere human hands. Gold, that most perfect of metals, never rusted, never decayed, it was unaffected by the strongest acids or other reagents then known. If it was possible to ingest gold, perhaps our bodies too would not decay. The melting together of different metals produced new properties—copper and tin alloyed together made bronze, a metal stronger than either, and at the same time looking more like gold. There were also chameleon-like substances, such as arsenic, that could exist both in metallic and non-metallic forms. The endless experimenting produced the chemical stockroom of the alchemist and, in a pattern still practiced by chemists until a few decades ago, every new substance was tasted.

Out of that ancient study of the transformations of matter, certain heavy metal salts, of lead, mercury and arsenic particularly, were identified as candidates for the elixir of life, the food of immortality. Today we recognize them as insidious poisons, that in small quantities seem harmless or pleasant. Lead salts were added to Roman wines to enhance their taste and, according to some latter-day historians, caused sterility among the aristocracy and were the true cause of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. Mercury salts were used in the felting of hats and hatters developed the hatter's shakes, often thought to be the host's malady at the mad-hatter's tea party. And humans can develop a remarkable tolerance for arsenic, if ingested at first in minute quantities. That fact provides the basis for Dorothy Sayer's murder mystery *Strong Poison*.

Mercury, lead and arsenic compounds had some powerful claims to being considered as approaching elixir status.

1) Most people in those days were probably afflicted with intestinal worms that were killed by these powerful heavy metal poisons. Mercury retained its use as a medicine until very recently, used for centuries against syphilis. The first modern chemotherapy agent, Ehrlich's magic bullet Salvarsan 606 reveals its metallic origin in the second half of its name—it was an arsenic compound.

2) Most people in China at that time probably suffered from mineral deficiencies, calcium and magnesium particularly, and ingestion of heavy metals temporarily made up for that deficiency—they gave one a feeling of improved health and vigor.

3) These heavy metal salts in small quantities gave you initially a mild sense of exhilaration—as pleasant and stimulating as tuberculosis proved to be to many creative individuals a century ago.

4) These materials were used for embalming—they clearly slowed down the decay of flesh, of protein. A few years ago, Chinese archaeologists unearthed a 2000-year old corpse, with its femoral artery as elastic as if the lady had died a year ago. The corpse was found half submerged in a fluid of cinnabar, of mercury sulfide. If corpses do not decay in the presence of compounds of mercury, then our only problem is to get the stuff into us before we die and without its killing us.

5) Finally the sulfides of the heavy metals are beautifully colored. Cinnabar, mercuric sulfide, is a bright, vermillion orange red, still found on Chinese shrines and simulated in Chinese textiles. On being heated slightly it turns into a yellow form. Half-way, of course is gold—also the color of the sun—that infallible source of warmth and light and energizer of vegetation. Arsenic sulfide, realgar is orange also. An egg-sized and egg-shaped sample of it is preserved in the Japanese Imperial Treasure House kept there since 1200 years ago when it was used by the alchemist-physicians of the time.

Chinese alchemy had broad aims. It never separated the search for immortality from the somewhat lesser goals of freedom and happiness while alive. Medicine and alchemy were not separate. Chinese alchemist-physicians prescribed animal-plant-mineral remedies for minor and major ailments and, for those ready for it, the secrets of elixir intake. An elixir would do you good only if you were physically and spiritually prepared. Chinese books tell of enlightened beings, made such by mercuric sulfide, floating around the countryside unencumbered by gravity.

Joanna Koob, another Guilford Humanistic Studies major, has unearthed and pointed out to me Greek pre-Socratic Western roots of alchemy. Somewhere, East and West came in contact. After the birth of Christendom, the search for avoiding death was eschewed, while the concern for the alleviation of illness moved forward. For the latter, plant and animal potions were used, but not minerals. When alchemy did raise its head in the West, it appeared separate from medicine, as a single-minded search for the elixir of life and—more or less distinct from it—the philosopher's stone for converting base metals into gold. In Prague you can still view the alchemists' row adjacent to the castle of the Holy Roman Emperor.

By the time of the Renaissance, the work of the alchemist had signally failed in its primary aim and had been markedly successful in its by-products—discovering new substances, developing the chemical processes of filtration, distillation, sublimation and crystallization; and deepening the understanding of the human psyche and ways of its purification.

The myth did not die, it was broadened by that Renaissance character Aureolus Philippus Theophrastus Bombastus von Hohenheim, who, so one story goes, thought himself greater than the ancient medical commentator Celsus, and therefore baptized himself Paracelsus. He had travelled in the Middle East, was familiar with the Western alchemical tradition and presumably made contact with the broader Eastern medical and elixir unification. On returning to Basel, Switzerland, he called on medicine to use chemicals for cures, thus becoming the major initiator of the Western tradition of Chemotherapy. At the same time he suggested that European alchemists were aiming too high, they should forsake the goal of life without death and be satisfied with the temporary enhancement of life and happiness.

That call for a chemical approach to disease brought a new person, a new outlook into the study of life, of the human organism. Now persons who were skeptical of alchemical claims, yet concerned to overcome suffering and at the same time fascinated by the transformations of inorganic nature, by chemistry, entered the Western search. It was at this point that mercury became popular as a cure for syphilis, a disease spreading in Europe at a fearful rate during the Renaissance period.

To prescribe chemicals sensibly to cure imbalances in the human body required a knowledge of that body's chemical composition. To gain that knowledge proved a complex and frustrating task. By 1800, it was widely believed that the body was not mere chemicals, that a life-force, a vital force resided in every living organism and was alone capable of creating, or synthesizing, the complex substances found there. That belief was a principle of resignation. Imagine then the profound impact when Friedrich Wöhler in Goettingen in 1828 quite by chance synthesized urea in the laboratory, a substance hitherto isolated only from the urine of animal or

man. In elation he wrote to his former teacher Berzelius that he could prepare urea without the kidney of either dog or man. To which Berzelius replied that if Wöhler could do that much in his youth, he would no doubt succeed in creating a testtube baby before he died.

The gulf between living and non-living chemicals had been bridged, just at the right time—during the period when theories of evolution were being debated, when people were asking how, by what mechanism, and when did man emerge from pre-human ancestors, and, further back, from that early non-living primordial slime. Did God need to breathe his spirit into the first living organism or did the original atoms have in them all that was needed to produce a George Washington, a Darwin, millenia later?

Wöhler suggested that no impassable gulf existed between non-living and living. But parallel to the work of the organic chemists, a separate controversy was raging regarding the possibility of spontaneous generation—whether mice could be bred from haystacks and maggots from rotting meat. Aristotle had suggested that fireflies arose from morning dew. That controversy seemingly was settled once and for all by the experiments of Pasteur. In his speech before the French Academy he proclaimed: “Never will the doctrine of spontaneous generation recover from this mortal blow.” Famous last words, for in the same decade in which those words were uttered, Darwin and Wallace were proposing a natural mechanism for the development of ever more complex organisms and Darwin speculated about the first emergence of life from lifeless molecules:

It is often said that all the conditions for the first production of a living organism are now present, which could ever have been present. But if (and oh what a big if) we could conceive in some warm little pond with all sorts of ammonia and phosphoric salts, light, heat, electricity &c present, that a protein compound was chemically formed, ready to undergo still more complex changes, at the present day such matter would be instantly devoured, or absorbed, which would not have been the case before living creatures were formed.

Almost a hundred years passed before simple lifeless molecules were successfully transformed in the laboratory, under conditions approaching those of the primitive earth, into substances known to be the building blocks of living systems. Charles Price’s volume of papers entitled “Synthesis of Life” opens with Stanley Miller’s classic paper of 1955. Following the suggestions of the Russian Oparin in the 20’s, the Britishers Bernal and Haldane, and the American Urey that the early earth contained oxygen not as atmospheric gas but only as part of water, Miller simulated lightning discharges by sending electric sparks through a mixture of methane, ammonia, water and hydrogen. Over twenty amino acids, many of them building blocks of animal and human protein, were isolated. Since then, more and more scientists have been moving into this field; most of the molecules from which the genetic material DNA is constructed have been synthesized also; and viruses have been crystallized and brought back to life; they have also been broken apart and reassembled. Molecular biologists now have the power by genetic intervention to unleash new bacteria into the world, to create life forms unlike any existing previously. This has scared them sufficiently so that they have had conferences for self-policing, searching for rules that will allow them to continue exploration without releasing into the world a bacterial menace against which we have no natural nor chemical defense.

We have come far since that early alchemical search for the elixir of life, that chemical potion which when simply swallowed allowed us to elude the fate of death. We gave up that simplistic dream in favor of the hard work of understanding life, and for long we fooled ourselves into thinking that that earlier myth had been left behind. But witness where detailed chemical, biochemical and medical knowledge has taken us. We have learned to overcome the body’s immune mechanism and can transplant kidneys and other organs and even hearts and are waiting for the first transplantation of part or all of a human brain. We have poured



money recently into the study of geriatrics, the study of the aging process itself and people even now are lying in deep freezes, placed there at the moment of death, in the hope of being resuscitated when a cure for their once fatal ailment is found.

Charles Price proposed the Synthesis of Life as a national goal for the '70's, taking over from the moon-shot goal of the 60's. A panel of consultants summoned by the U. S. Senate in 1970 proposed, as an alternative, a national program for the conquest of cancer. Ever since, government money, our money, our taxes, have been flowing into the hands of biochemical researchers. The bated breath with which we wait for the biochemical equivalent of the moon landing, attests to the power of the primordial myth of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness *through chemistry*.

There is one more insight for us. We have come to learn that to come close to understanding the secret of life and the conditions for its perfection, we must also know ourselves, and that at the minutely detailed, the atomic and molecular level. When we reach that level we meet those strange discoveries enshrined in quantum theory, wave-particle dualism, complementarity—how reminiscent of the Chinese Yin-Yang symbolism—and the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. This last confronts us with the fact that the process of experimenting, of observing, influences what is observed. There is no absolute objective knowledge, knower and known are indissolubly linked. Thus to push our chemical knowledge further we have to become philosophers and psychologists—and, if scholars in *those* disciplines wish to understand life, they must perforce become chemists also.

When we have reached that reunification of our splintered knowledge and awareness, when we have developed the wisdom and sensitivity of sages, then perhaps life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness will be ours, and chemistry will have helped us reach our goal.

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# IS THE THOUGHT OF AN ELECTRON A REAL THOUGHT?

by

*Sheridan Simon*

*(Physics)*

Everybody knows that scientists deal with real, concrete things.

Everybody knows that scientists sneer at the abstract.

Everybody knows that scientists hate myths.

Then what in the name of Werner Heisenberg is a member of the Physics Department doing here?

One reason might be to dispel the above myths. After all, everybody believes in the Easter Bunny, electricity, and the tooth fairy too. Unfortunately, when Mel Keiser asked me to take part in this year's Myth Colloquium series the blood rushed to my head and I fell briefly into belief in a personal myth: that I am a scholar of broadly based, deeply founded, and loftily raised intellectual background. This is a recurrent problem with me, since this myth has much in common with those mentioned above (differing only in the number of people who believe it). This particular myth always founders upon the unpleasant fact that three-quarters of my undergraduate and all of my graduate courses were in physics, math, and astronomy. I am therefore exposed as having sold out to the scientific establishment while simultaneously discoursing on myth. While my colleagues are wheeling in the gallows, I will try to get in a few words.

There are two kinds of physicists. One sort spends their days taking apart complicated machines, staring morosely at pieces of them, and swearing in low tones. They are called experimentalists, though in fact they are simply people who subscribe to the myth that nothing is real unless you can use it to pound nails. Occasionally these people are able to produce something interesting, like pocket calculators, atomic bombs, or solar energy.

The other kind of physicist THINKS about complicated machines, stares into space, and swears in low tones. They are called theoreticians, and they subscribe to the myth that nothing is real unless it can be measured. They also hold a belief still more farfetched: that a human mind can hope to understand some facet of the physical universe all around us. Examples of things thought up by this group include the Uncertainty Principle, the Law of Conservation of Grief, and the General Theory of Relativity.

Theoretical physicists invent systems of ideas which are meant to represent a sort of map of the real world. The map is necessary because the real world itself is too complicated to deal with directly. This map, this system of ideas, if it is indeed a fair representation of the real world and obeys certain logical rules, such as self-consistency, goes by the dignified title of "theory."

But a map, however detailed, is not the same as the territory it represents. A theory, to be comprehended by human beings, must be limited in its scope (as the universe is not) and must make use of a known and understandable set of assumptions (which the universe is indifferent to). Considering these and other limitations, it would not be surprising to find that theoretical physics does not work well at all. The incredible fact is that it does work; it provides limited human beings with a set of maps, or myths, with which to think about the real world and which can be used to predict the behavior of real systems.

The word "myth" above is used cautiously. While my fellow theoreticians would go along with "map" as a sort of synonym for "theory," they would have to be pushed hard to go along with "allegory." "Story" would not do at all, and if my use of "myth" gets to the wrong people (say those who granted my degree in Physics) I could be found some sunny morning floating face down in Guilford College Lake, my membership card in the American Physical Society still clenched in my hand.

As a matter of fact, I don't think "myth" is a bad word for theory at all. The myths I learned on my mother's knee were often tales of a rather fantastic world where strange and powerful beings and forces contended with one another; many of these were also clearly allegories on more mundane subjects. Things happened in myths that were foreign to everyday experience, and the heroes were often larger-than-life figures capable of unusual feats. All of this sounds much like theoretical physics. The analogy may be clarified by an example of a "myth" from theoretical physics:

### ATLAS DRUGGED; or How Something Can Be Too Simple to Understand

There is an underlying principle of human nature called by the ancients (who were wise in all things) the Principle of Least Action. People always try to do things in the easiest possible way, and moan and groan to Heaven of unfairness when forced to do anything else. Although it is a little-known fact in these days, it is nonetheless true that physicists are people, and so obey this principle as well.

In the days of our fathers' fathers (the Nineteenth Century) physicists had been complaining of the complications that had entered into their studies of the world with increasing fervor for well-nigh a century. We can perhaps understand this; in those days before our present wisdom reared itself up the physicists were mired in the intricacies of Thermodynamics and Electromagnetics. They sent up their prayers (and sometimes blasphemies) to Heaven all through the late Eighteenth and early Nineteenth Centuries, until even the patience of the gods were exhausted.

The chief among the gods debated with one another over a proper punishment for the physicists, who were expecting the world to be as they wished rather than as it was. Finally Iris, goddess of Discord, suggested that the physicists be punished with the electron, and it was agreed.

Now physicists learn new things about the universe by experiment: they construct apparatus to measure things, and usually find that their measurements lead them to a more detailed and more beautiful picture of the world around them, which is admirable. So the gods arranged for experiments to reveal the existence of the electron, a tiny entity that made its presence known by its possession of a negative charge.

Once the electron had been discovered, the physicists sought with all their might to measure its properties, since in this way the world would be enriched with knowledge and beauty. They kept up their agonized protests against the complexity of Thermodynamics and Electromagnetics, however, and so the gods persevered in their punishment.

"How may we picture the electron?" asked the theoreticians of the experimentalists. "We may not rest until we can fit this new discovery into our understanding of the world." And the experimentalists built their machines, and took them apart, and built them again, and sought after the measurable properties of the electron.

"It has mass!" they shouted, and shook sheafs of paper filled with data in front of the myopic eyes of the theoreticians. "See! We've got a charge and a mass, now!"

The theoreticians were somewhat mollified by this discovery, but continued their prayers to the gods for simplicity. "Just this once," they begged, "let it be simple. Let the electron be simple, at least, if nothing else is." One of them even suggested making a burnt offering of an experimentalist to the gods to this end. And the gods smiled.

In the fullness of time, it was found that the electron had other properties than charge and mass; one of these was spin. But still the experimentalists searched for more, for they had found only seven properties of the electron, and only three of these, charge, mass, and spin, could in any way be pictured by the theoreticians of the time.

There came a time when the last experimentalist at work on the problem threw up his hands in despair and went fishing, and the theoreticians saw the full extent of the joke laid on them by the gods, and sat down before their computers and wept. They wept because the properties possessed by the electron were charge, and mass, and spin, which can at least be understood, and four other properties, which could be understood mathematically; but there were no other measurable properties of the electron (this last phrase being pronounced in a low and significant tone when this tale is read to children ).

The theoreticians *tried* to describe the electron; it was their calling in life, after all. But they had to start somewhere: “How big is it?” asked students, and other troublemakers. And they had to reply that the electron had no size. This is not one of its properties. No size? No *size*?

“Then its color! At least you can tell us that!” Thus the questioners. But the theoreticians had to reply again that the electron had no color, that this was not one of its properties. “Aha! It’s gray! Well, there is a place to start!” said the questioners (who were wondering if this would be on the final). And the theoreticians sadly emphasized again: “No, not gray. It has no color. The electron does not have the property of color.”

At this point several questioners changed their majors. Others demanded “Where is the electron, then? At least you can point to where it is. Can’t you?” And, trembling now, they replied “No. The electron does not have the property of position. I can’t tell you where it is.”

The theoreticians were chastised, and learned not to make unreasonable demands of the gods, and to this day they must live with the electron which no man can picture, not because of its complexity, not because of its intricate nature, but because it has no size, no color, no position—it is too simple to be understood.

\* \* \* \* \*

There are other “myths” in theoretical physics as well. All of our pictures of the real world are faulted, limited by our own humanity and finite nature, but each is in a sense a vision of something truly magnificent. We do see the universe “through a glass, darkly,” but the dim picture of power and beauty perhaps always beyond our complete understanding is a goad to continue our search for greater myths.



## MYTH: MAGIC, METAPHOR, MEANING

by

Cyril H. Harvey

(Geology and Academic Dean)

*Myth*: "A story, the origin of which is forgotten, ostensibly historical but usually such as to explain some practice, belief, institution, or natural phenomenon. . . . especially associated with religious rites and beliefs."<sup>1</sup>

How many times have I admonished a student for beginning papers with dictionary definitions? They are so dull and have a vague and unsubtle character. They leave so many questions unanswered—and even unasked.

For instance, is a myth true or false? Actually, this is an easy distinction, for if someone says a thing is mythical, it's false, while if they say it is mythic, then it's true.

Should a myth be understood literally or symbolically? Here we have another simple question. If you want to prove that a myth "is just a myth," then take it literally. For example, Paul Tillich claims that the great symbols embodied in our Western religious myths have lost much of their power and depth today because modern theologians have too often attempted to defend the literal qualities of these stories rather than their symbolic truths. But now we come to a slightly more difficult question. If a myth is literally false, must it be symbolically true? That is, can myths be totally false? Carol Stoneburner says they can, at least if they are about apple pie.<sup>2</sup> I expect she is right, but then how can we tell? She says she prefers the symbolic meaning of apple seeds and apple cider. But is the truth of a mythic symbol simply a matter of preference? Our dictionary definition suggests that this may be the case, for if the myth does not *explain* something to my satisfaction, why should I think of it as a myth at all. We seem here to be getting dangerously close to something we might call "situation mythology," an approach not likely to provide any clear-cut answers and which will satisfy few. Let us try, therefore, another line of questioning.

Why is it that myths are so often associated with religious rites and beliefs? Is it because the mythological stories rely on supernatural characters and events? While this may be plausible at first, we must remind ourselves that what seems supernatural to one person or culture may appear quite natural to another.

The cargo cults found among certain primitive tribes in New Guinea worship airplanes as gods. Their legends recall the times of 30 years ago when these winged gods flew over their jungles, sometimes in anger and sometimes with benevolence, bearing gifts of food and supplies. Men in service of these gods, by constructing long flat shrines in the jungle were able to entice the metallic gods to land and disgorge many wonderful objects. Today, years after these 20th century war machines invaded the jungles of New Guinea, the people continue to worship model airplanes and construct miniature landing strips while they tell and retell the legend that one day the flying gods will visit them again and times of prosperity will follow. We, of course, understand their mistake. These primitive tribes are simply naive and so ignorant of modern technology that they have come to explain these phenomena in wholly unrealistic ways. Yet, their myth does explain their world to their satisfaction; if we avoid any literal critique of the myth, we may more easily appreciate its great symbolic power. The symbolic truths concerning the human condition which reside in their worship of airplane gods may not differ so very much from our own.

In the September 15, 1967 issue of *Science*, there appeared an article by William Markowitz entitled "The Physics and Metaphysics of Unidentified Flying Objects."<sup>3</sup> In this article he considered the question "whether UFO's are under extraterrestrial control." His analysis was from two points of view. First, using the assumption



that the “elemental laws of celestial mechanics and physics, including special relativity” are obeyed, he concluded that extraterrestrial UFO’s are impossible. His treatment, I might add, was mathematically rigorous. As a second alternative, he assumed that the laws of physics may not be obeyed, and after quickly deciding that this would require extraterrestrial beings to have “various magical properties,” he stated that “Anyone who wishes is free to accept such magical properties, but I cannot.” In a final attempt he considered what he called semi-magic hypotheses and concluded that the feasibility of these appeared quite unlikely to him as well.

Reader response<sup>4</sup> to this article from the scientific community was overwhelmingly critical. Most respondents said in effect that Markowitz had only demonstrated that given our own current formulation of the “laws of physics” we were unable to explain extraterrestrial control of UFO’s. Arthur C. Clarke, the British science fiction writer, put it best: “Any sufficiently advanced technology,” he said, “is indistinguishable from magic.”<sup>5</sup> Few, if any, of the respondents indicated a belief in extraterrestrial UFO’s, but they made it quite clear that Markowitz had provided a weak proof indeed by denying the possibility of “magic.”

Markowitz’s problem is all too often our own. We tend to understand the technology of our culture as pragmatic and scientifically based while we identify the technological instruments and practices of many other cultures as unsophisticated, superstitious, and misguided. Many artifacts unearthed by archeologists are difficult to identify as to function because the associated technological knowledge has been lost. Such objects are usually described as having served a religious, ceremonial, or merely decorative purpose.

For example, let us consider and compare the rain-making technologies used in southwestern North America during the past several hundred years. The shaman of the pre-Hispanic pueblo cultures knew elaborate rituals for appealing to the thunderbird or other phantom spirits. There were special costumes with carved face masks, decorated with corn stalks. Certain charms and jewelry were required, along with specially designed squash gourd rattles. Complex dance steps and elaborate chants invoked the rain clouds. Sometimes it rained, and sometimes it didn’t; in which case the shaman could be certain that the great spirits were displeased because of minor missteps in the dance or the use of a discourteous tone of voice in the chant. Or possibly the shaman had overlooked the inauspicious flights of birds just prior to the ceremony. “More care will be taken next time and rain will come!”

The 20th century shaman practices his art differently. The morning of the ceremony he drives in his Thunderbird to the airstrip where, after donning an elaborate costume dangling with wires and hoses of several types, he climbs into his Phantom jet, covers his face with a specially designed shield, and begins a chant to something he calls the tower (or did he say shower?). Climbing into the sky on the wings of his Phantom, he sprinkles the air with little clouds of magic crystals specially compounded from silver and iodine, and returns home. Sometimes it rains, and sometimes it doesn’t; in which case he surmises that the conditions were not just right—the temperature was too high or the humidity too low. Maybe the adiabatic lapse rate was wrong and he should have conducted the ceremony when the sun was higher in the sky. “More care will be taken next time and rain will come!” You will have to agree that the technology of making it rain in the deserts of southwestern North America is a complicated and frustrating enterprise, no matter when or how you go about it.

As another example, let us imagine how an anthropologist, not at all familiar with 20th century technology, would describe our methods for hunting petroleum. The process begins in a large temple with many rooms occupied by a priestly group of men, all similarly dressed. They consult many pieces of paper of various dimensions on which are inscribed mysterious lines and blotches and marked at intervals with various runes and numerals. After long study a group of high priests retires to special temple rooms where they talk in hushed tones and then select a suitable tract of land for the sacred rites of oil finding.

Bands of warriors are then dispatched to these lands with small trucks, which are specially equipped with small drilling equipment. The warriors traverse the land for many days stopping at regular intervals to conduct the drilling ceremony, in which a small, shallow hole is drilled into the earth. They then lower into the earth a special offering for the great spirit they call Seismic, who they believe lives in the underworld. There is a muffled explosion and the earth shakes and often a plume of water and earth erupts from the depths of the hole. Many seem to consider this an auspicious sign that Seismic might be willing to release petroleum itself if the drilling ceremony were practiced more elaborately. It is apparent from the conversations overheard among the warriors that they seek what they call Seismic reflections. This strongly suggests that the symbolic intent of this drilling ritual is to penetrate the mind of this terrestrial spirit in the hope that reflections of his thoughts about petroleum will be released. They seem to believe that Seismic speaks to them by shaking the earth, for they spread a complex of paraphernalia over the surface of the ground before lowering the offering into the hole. The paraphernalia, they explain, are for recording Seismic reflections. The recordings themselves are reverently preserved and returned to the temple for careful study. Once the priests feel that they have divined the meaning of the Seismic reflections, they dispatch a second band of warriors to the particular spot indicated by the Seismic message. This time they go with large trucks and large drilling equipment. The drilling ceremony is performed once more, but on a grand and monumental scale. A large hole is drilled deep into the earth with the expectation that petroleum itself will erupt to the surface. Sometimes it does, but more often it does not. The faith of the priests and warriors, however, is not shaken. Seismic reflections, they say, are difficult to record and even more difficult to interpret. The spirit speaks mysteriously and uses many ambiguous symbols—not unlike the Delphic oracle of ancient Greece. They work continuously to improve their paraphernalia, the procedures of the ritual itself, and the methods for deciphering the mysterious convoluted lines and patterned blotches which reflect the spirit's knowledge. The older priests have spent their entire adult lives on the task and have passed on their knowledge of lore and spells to their followers. Someday understanding will come.

There have been many other hunting ceremonies practiced throughout the history and prehistory of man. Those of some contemporary tribes and cultures have been recorded in great detail, if not with intimate understanding, by ethnographers during the past 100 years, and with even less understanding by travelers and explorers in earlier centuries. Archeologists make the best of a very incomplete record, but when one encounters artifacts such as the cave paintings of paleolithic man in Western Europe, nothing that can be said is very meaningful. Aesthetically these paintings are inspiring and they even contain profound symbolism when viewed from the perspective of the 20th century. Yet we have no way to faithfully recreate either the emotional power or the symbolic meaning which these images evoked in the minds of their creators.

In summary, if we understand myth as dealing with the supernatural—as concerned with superstition and magic, then we will get myth confused with science, for much of what we identify in other cultures, whether prehistoric or contemporary, as ritual, ceremony, or decoration, is directly comparable to what we call science and technology in our own culture. Most of us have no more clarity about what happens when we turn on our television set than does a man when he spins a prayer wheel in Tibet. Nor do we have less faith.

With our present state of knowledge, we are able to prove, at least to our own satisfaction, that these other cultures are mistaken about the way the world works. We say that their explanations are mythical and not literally true, but we are not equally able to perform the same service for ourselves.

If there is a difference between a reliance on mythology and magic and a reliance on science and technology for explanations of our world, it must hinge on our own admission of ignorance, as Leslie White, the well-known anthropologist, suggests in the following paragraph from his book *The Concept of Culture*.



Myths of all kinds explained how the world came to be, or how it was shaped, who put up the sun, the moon, and the stars, the origin of animals, why the badger has a white streak on his forehead, the first homicide, the institution of the clans, the origin of fire, the acquisition of corn, and so on. Primitive peoples have answers to all the important questions, which is, strictly speaking, omniscience.

From the standpoint of the achievement of civilization intellectually, omniscience is one of the greatest obstacles to the achievement of a civilized mind. The achievement of pure, uncontaminated, unadulterated ignorance by science, the insistence upon not-knowing when we do not know, and the defending of this ignorance with vigor and determination, is what characterizes the modern civilized mind and distinguishes it from all of its predecessors.<sup>6</sup>

It is easy enough to demonstrate objectively and logically that we are ignorant of many things. Indeed, the ingenious methods of science can and have been used to prove that some things cannot be known at all and that there are conjectures about the world which cannot be proved either true or false.

An interesting consequence of this indeterminacy is that in spite of our increasing scientific knowledge, the world, as we experience it, will always contain elements of unpredictability and surprise. And the natural laws as we have them formulated will never fully explain everything that happens. Whether we consider ourselves as ignorant, or the world as miraculous, or both, is a matter of individual belief.

Two rather uncomplicated lines of reasoning lead us quickly to the view that the world is not fully knowable by the human mind. First, the mind is a part of the world. In order to know the world fully you must know your own mind fully. That alone seems impossible, but even if you could achieve such knowledge, the act itself would literally *change* your mind, with the result that you still would not know your own mind.

On the other hand, even if we assume that the human mind need not know itself in order to fully know the world, we have a problem, since the brain is so much smaller than the world. All the information I gain about the outside world must be stored someplace within my mind. However this is done, and many biologists and psychologists today suspect the information is stored in the DNA molecules found in the nerve cells of the brain, the storage capacity of the mind must be limited. The fact that we have little or no perception of this limit during a lifetime is more a testimony to our meager knowledge of the world than it is evidence that we have unlimited powers of understanding.

Both these lines of reasoning are based on materialist assumptions which require that each bit of information occupies a finite space as a non-random configuration of matter or energy. There are many, of course, who prefer to postulate non-materialistic information systems. I am not one of these persons, and will not attempt here to present their views, but I have no doubt that they would disagree with many of the concepts and conclusions presented in this paper.

Our experience of the world is, in any case, very selective. Before the invention of the camera and the instant replay we could only observe an event once, and then only from a single vantage point. Even though technology has greatly extended and expanded our senses, our knowledge remains an abstraction of reality. We are fundamentally inductive creatures, forming generalized concepts of the world from scattered particulars of experience. We classify and stereotype all that we encounter simply *because* we are fallible. We formulate natural laws which simultaneously explain and predict the events of our lives. We are very clever at this, but it would all be unnecessary if we were truly omniscient. We derive much confidence that we are right about the world from our discovery that others agree with us. Yet it is sobering to realize that we can only agree because we are dealing with abstractions of our separate and individualistic experiences. Like

mythic truths, which suffer from literal interpretations, generalizations depend on a certain *lack* of specificity—and so does language. Words are not precise despite our efforts to make them so through the construction of dictionary definitions. Indeed, they must be imprecise if we are to communicate at all. The content of human language and, therefore, of human concepts is metaphoric and symbolic.

What we believe about our experience corresponds less to the reality of the world than to our understanding of the human condition. And for each of us this understanding is expressed in the symbols and rituals of our culture and by the metaphors of our language and literature. I intend here to use the word literature in its broadest possible sense—not only the humane letters (as they are so often called) but also the arts, the sciences, and mathematics.

For example, during the past 200 to 300 years, scientists have dealt increasingly with unseen and unfamiliar phenomena. As they have done so, their concepts and theories have become not so much descriptions of the world as it is, but instead, are imaginative suggestions of what it is like. Obvious metaphoric qualities are found in such phrases as radio waves, the food chain, electric current, the planetary atom, energy flow, the earth's crust, chemical bonds, the reef community, crystal lattice, and the benzene ring. But we must not suppose that these phrases are merely poetic figures of speech. In a more profound way, scientific theories have mythic qualities, for they lose much of their creative and expressive power if taken too literally. Like metaphors, they lose their elegance, their appearance of truth, and therefore, their usefulness when overextended.

But what of Leslie White's claim that science replaced the omniscience of myth and created the "modern civilized mind" through "the achievement of pure, uncontaminated, unadulterated ignorance"? Who among us, whether scientist or not, would claim to be so ignorant? Socrates perhaps, but he is, after all, not among us. My response is that the science to which Dr. White refers is only a method, and an objective one at that, while scientists, like everyone else, are human with inescapable subjective knowledge. Loren Eiseley is persistent in reminding us of this duality. "Man has a belief in seen and unseen nature. He is both pragmatist and mystic."<sup>7</sup>

We have seen first that technology may be based on either mythic or scientific knowledge and may appear in either instance as magical to the uninitiated. Now we see that both mythic knowledge and scientific knowledge bear metaphoric truth which can be lost when either is taken too literally. I feel that Leslie White's distinction between myth and science is overdrawn, and suggest instead that the transition from the primitive to the civilized mind maybe better described as the loss of that innocence which accepts literal rather than symbolic truth. If this is so, then our comparison of myth and science is not yet complete, for we must know more about symbols, their origin and their use, whether they be the symbols of language, of myth, or of science.

Before the discovery of the unconscious mind by Sigmund Freud, in the late 19th century, epistemology was comparatively simple. There was the subject and the object—the observer and the thing observed. The phenomena of the so-called real world are sampled by the senses and then perceptions form in the mind. The real world remains largely unknown and the known world occupies the mind. To this dual model, we now have added a third element, the unconscious mind, which is also largely unknown to us. Our principle source of information about the interior, unknown world comes not through the senses but through dreams.

Carl Jung explored the content and function of the unconscious mind throughout his long professional career, and his concepts as set forth in his many writings have gained great popularity. His thoughts are particularly pertinent here because he has dealt extensively with the psychic origins of both myths and symbols.

For Jung, the boundaries of the conscious mind are defined simply enough—by what is unknown. These



boundaries are encountered, not only in the outside world, but within the mind itself, and beyond these interior boundaries lies the unconscious. This portion of our psyche is divided by Jung into two parts, the personal unconscious and the collective unconscious. The need for clarity in this distinction is so great that I wish to refer here directly to the words of Jung, himself.

The *personal* unconscious is the sum of

everything of which I know, but of which I am not at the moment thinking, everything of which I was once conscious but have now forgotten, everything perceived by my senses, but not noted by my conscious mind; everything which, involuntarily and without paying attention to it, I feel, think, remember, want, and do; [and] all the future things that are taking shape in me and will sometime come to consciousness. . . . Besides these we must also include all more or less intentional repressions of painful thoughts and feelings.<sup>8</sup>

In summary, Jung has stated that the contents of the *personal* unconscious “are integral components of the individual personality and therefore could just as well be conscious.”<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, the *collective* unconscious includes all the “qualities that are not individually acquired but are inherited, e.g., instincts . . . [and] archetypes . . .”<sup>10</sup> Thus the collective unconscious forms, as it were, “. . . an omnipresent, unchanging, and everywhere identical *quality or substrate of the psyche per se*.”<sup>11</sup> Elsewhere Jung defines his term archetype as in itself “an irrepresentable, unconscious, pre-existent form that seems to be part of the inherited structure of the psyche. . . .”<sup>12</sup>

The difference between form and content in the unconscious mind is fundamental to Jung’s thought, yet in his writings he frequently reminds us that he has been misunderstood most often on this very point. For example, in *The Archetypes and the Collective Unconscious*, he says:

Again and again I encounter the mistaken idea that an archetype is determined in regard to its content, in other words that it is a kind of unconscious idea . . . archetypes *are not* determined as regards their content, but only as regards their form and then only to a very limited degree. A primordial image is determined as to its content only when it has become conscious and is therefore filled out with the material of conscious experience . . . The archetype in itself is empty and purely formal . . . a possibility of representation which given *a priori*. The representations themselves are not inherited, only the forms, and in that respect they correspond in every way to the instincts, which are also determined in form only.”<sup>13</sup>

Both instincts and archetypes lie deep within the psyche and have a long prehistoric, evolutionary, animal heritage. The nest-building instinct of birds and the web-spinning instinct of spiders manifest themselves as impulses to build, yet the shape of the nest or the design of the web is dependent on the form, or primordial image, which lies deep within the nerve tissue of the animal. It is clear from Jung’s writings that he understands and accepts the concepts of biological evolution, and he seems to be suggesting that the forms which manifest themselves in rigid patterns of instinctive behavior in lower animals have been so modified in human evolution that they now may be represented by a great variety of images, the specific content of which depends to a large extent on our conscious experience of the outside world. That is, the images which form in the human mind are composed of the contents of sensations received from the unknown outside world and shaped by the archetypal forms which reside within the unconscious regions of the psyche. In short, it is the archetypes which impose meaning on our experience.

Leslie White defines man as an animal with the ability to symbol, by which he means that man has the ability “to originate, determine, and bestow meaning upon things and events in the external world, and the

ability to comprehend such meanings.”<sup>14</sup> He adds, further, that meaning is not bestowed by the senses, and as an illustration of this he quotes Helen Keller’s account of that moment when she first understood that Ann Sullivan was teaching her language:

We walked down the path to the well-house, attracted by the honeysuckle with which it was covered. Someone was drawing water and my teacher placed my hand under the spout. As the cool stream gushed over one hand she spelled into the other the word water, first slowly, then rapidly. I stood still, my whole attention fixed upon the motion of her fingers. Suddenly I felt a misty consciousness as of something forgotten—a thrill of returning thought, and somehow the mystery of language was revealed to me.”<sup>15</sup>

Without sight or hearing Helen Keller discovered the meaning of language as if it were “something forgotten,” “a returning thought.” How was this possible? Jung would say that the same experiences of water on her one hand and of spelling on the other combined into an image which was given form by the unconscious, but universal, archetype for human language.

One is reminded here of Plato’s *Meno* in which Socrates, by asking questions only, teaches an uneducated slave boy geometry as a demonstration that learning is actually recollection, and that the human soul is, therefore, immortal. Socrates scratches the geometrical figures quite imperfectly in the dirt, yet the slave boy grasps the precise relationships which would be true if the forms had been ideally drawn. Plato, of course, maintains throughout his writings that ideal form is devoid of substance and that perfection of form is only to be found in the non-material world. The slave boy understands the geometric forms because he is possessed of an immortal, non-material human soul, which has knowledge of the forms. Jung, by contrast, takes a more materialistic view and regards the forms, or archetypes, as “aboriginal, innate, and inherited shapes of the human mind,”<sup>16</sup> or in another phrase, “part of the inherited structure of the psyche.”<sup>17</sup>

For the second time we must bypass the issue of whether forms or non-random patterns of information must be material or whether they may be non-material. There is not space to discuss the point further here, since we must return to our exploration of science and myth.

According to Jung, many different images may form within a single individual’s mind under the influence of a particular archetype. And this number, however great, has been multiplied many times over through the experiences of all mankind, who, we must remember, share all archetypes in common. During his life Jung studied the images and symbols found in the mythology, art, language, and dreams of many cultures, past and present, and identified within them themes and motifs which helped him to describe the qualities of the archetypes themselves, even though he felt that the “. . . real nature of the archetype is not capable of being made conscious . . . .”<sup>18</sup>

The most frequently recurring motifs have been presented to us by Jung as the universal mythic symbols of mankind. They impose themselves on our experience of the external world and give it meaning. It is both a personal meaning and a universal meaning. Personal because the *content* of the symbolic image is uniquely individualized by personal experience. Yet universal because the *form* of the symbolic image is archetypal and present in us all.

To be without satisfying mythic symbols, according to Jung, is to be without meaning, for meaning is not bestowed by experience, or the senses, or the conscious mind acting alone, but by “the cooperation of the conscious and the unconscious.” With regard to the relationship of science to myth Jung says, “No science will ever replace myth, and a myth cannot be made out of any science.”<sup>19</sup> Yet he also has said that “Myths are the earliest form of science.”<sup>20</sup> There is no contradiction here for what he is saying is that we invent science as a way to explain our world, but we do not, and cannot, invent myth. Instead it speaks to us about

the meaning of the world, our lives, and our science. As Jung says in his autobiography: "Meaning makes a great many things endurable—perhaps everything . . . it is not that 'God' is a myth, but that myth is the revelation of a divine life in Man."<sup>21</sup> Speaking for myself, this is a far more satisfying and meaningful definition of myth than that I obtained from Webster's dictionary.

In review, we have considered myth and compared it to science at three different levels. If the content of myth is understood to deal with magical and supernatural explanations of the world, it seems to be neither more nor less miraculous than science, and indeed the distinction between mythically and scientifically based technologies is not easily made except from a biased vantage point. If as an alternative we consider myth to consist of metaphoric statements about the world, it will be equally difficult to demonstrate to the impartial observer that myth and science differ significantly.

However, when compared with respect to the meaning they bestow upon our lives we find there is a profound difference between science and myth. Science occupies the conscious mind, orients its investigation toward the experiential world through the use of the body's senses and draws heavily on past experience stored within the personal unconscious. By contrast, myth emanates from the unconscious and projects meaning onto our conscious experience, but it gains its power not from the senses or from the intellect as much as from the archetypal forms of the collective unconscious.

One final thought more in the form of an hypothesis than a conclusion: While we must assume that the number of different archetypal forms is very great, it is also clear that this number must be limited, and that some archetypes are much more powerful and more frequently used than others. Also, while it is true that science itself does not employ the archetypes to bestow subjective meaning upon the world, we must realize that in Jungian terms the archetypes are used by science to create the metaphoric images which abound in scientific concepts and theories. As the phenomena under study by scientists become increasingly obscure and unfamiliar to the majority of humanity, the metaphoric images of science created through the use of archetypes must become quite novel. On the frontiers of science today individuals are having sense experiences, augmented by elaborate instrumentation, that are rare and even unique in the history of mankind. These experiences cannot be shared directly with others, but the images which form in the scientist's mind, with the help of the ancient and universal archetypal forms, can be shared. Yet there are many, especially non-scientists, who feel repulsed by these images. C. P. Snow's well known book *The Two Cultures*<sup>22</sup> addresses itself to the unfortunate lack of mutual understanding often found between those engaged in the sciences and the humanities. I am suggesting here the hypothesis that this conflict may arise from an unconscious and thoroughly repressed dismay that, if expressed, might sound like this: "My archetypes which have given such power and meaning to my life experience are being misused, distorted and even prostituted by those others for their explanation of a totally different experience which I cannot have and cannot even imagine, and I resent it."

Is it possible that the rapid extension of our senses by mechanical and technological means has suddenly placed us as human animals in an environment which is so other-worldly in an evolutionary sense that we have not yet had time enough as a species to evolve new archetypes suitably adapted for finding the meaning necessary to endure these nether reaches of the world, probed so recently by the human mind?

#### FOOTNOTES

<sup>1</sup> Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 5th ed., G. & C. Merriam Co., 1946.

<sup>2</sup> Stoneburner, Carol, "On: Eating the Apple; Sippin the Cider; Spitting Out the Seeds; and Canning Apple-



sauce—But *Not* On: Baking Apple Pie,” *Guilford Review*, No. 2, Fall, 1975.

<sup>3</sup> Markowitz, William, “The Physics and Metaphysics of Unidentified Flying Objects,” *Science*, Vol. 157, pp. 1274-1279, September 15, 1967.

<sup>4</sup> “Letters,” *Science*, Vol. 158, p. 580, November 3, 1967, and pp. 1265-1266, December 8, 1967.

<sup>5</sup> Clarke, Arthur C., “Letters,” *Science*, Vol. 159, p. 255, January 19, 1968.

<sup>6</sup> White, Leslie A., and Beth Dillingham, *The Concept of Culture*, Burgess Publishing Company, 1973, p. 67.

<sup>7</sup> Eiseley, Loren, *The Firmament of Time*, Atheneum, 1966, p. 4.

<sup>8</sup> Jung, Carl G., *Memories, Dreams, and Reflections*, Vintage Books (Random House), 1965, Glossary, p. 401.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 402.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 401.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 402.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 392-393.

<sup>14</sup> White, Leslie A., and Beth Dillingham, *The Concept of Culture*, Burgess Publishing Company, 1973, p. 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>16</sup> Jung, Carl G., *Man and His Symbols*, Doubleday, 1964, p. 67.

<sup>17</sup> Jung, Carl G., *Memories, Dreams and Reflections*, Vintage Books (Random House), 1965, p. 392.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 392.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 304.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>22</sup> Snow, C. P., *The Two Cultures*, Blackie & Son Ltd., Glasgow, 1959.













# GUILFORD REVIEW

The background is a solid orange color. Several thin, straight black lines are drawn across the page, some intersecting the text. A large, expressive black brushstroke, resembling a wing or a tail, sweeps from the upper right towards the bottom right corner.

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NUMBER 4



# Guilford Review



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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The selection from EVERITT by Dean Regenos originally appeared in NORTHWEST REVIEW.

"The Journey" by John Pipkin originally appeared in the PILOT; "Swamp Fire" in TAR RIVER POETS; and "Pomegranate" in AWARD-WINNING POEMS of the North Carolina Poetry Society. All six poems are included in HALF AFTER LOVE (Moore Publishing Company, 1976).

"Venetians All" and "Jigsaw Puzzle" by Ann Deagon appeared originally in AURA; "Going Under" in CRUCIBLE; "Before Swine" and "Lo Sposalizio" in NEW COLLAGE.



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COVER by Adele Groulx



## P R E F A C E

The GUILFORD REVIEW over the past two years has been closely related to the Guilford Colloquium, in which faculty, students, and visitors come together to explore questions interdisciplinary in structure and humane in import. A schedule of the 1976-77 Colloquium is printed here on the final page.

Since the topic of the fall Colloquium is CREATIVE PROCESS IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES, it seemed appropriate to devote this fall issue to creative work done by faculty and campus guests. Much of the material included here has come out of Guilford's policy of granting study leaves to faculty. Richard Morton and Ann Deagon were granted leaves for the purpose of continuing their writing. Others--William Burris, Mary Feagins, Hiram Hilty--were moved to write by their experiences of other cultures encountered on their travels. Still others, such as John Pipkin and Dean Regenos, took no leave but wrote all the same. For the real journey, as we all know, is inward.

Members of the Art Department, Adele Groulx, James McMillan, and Martha Zelt, have contributed drawings to the issue. Finally, several poets who have recently visited the Guilford campus--Betty Adcock, Gary Steven Corseri, Elizabeth Sewell, and Chuck Sullivan--have kindly contributed some of their work.

It is our hope that this issue of the GUILFORD REVIEW will serve to recognize and to encourage the practice of the creative arts at Guilford.

--Ann Deagon, Editor





## THIRTY-EIGHT

I have been still, lying  
straight as a track some other motion takes.  
My backbone's the color of metal.  
Do not be fooled: like the rain-star on the rose,  
I come back. My love grows, a bone  
in the throat. You may break  
my mirror where it wrinkles--  
that's a ripple on the dreaming lake.  
I sing it. When you love me, you must  
remember what I remember. Your luck  
has nothing to do with this.

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## LAST LOVE POEM

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If I am permitted to stop singing,  
I will speak simple stories: a farmer  
watches the crows pass up his harvest.  
Leaving, the black wings are beautiful,  
merciful as oil on water. Goodbye  
is the language I want  
to stop dancing in red shoes.  
I will touch this bald world,  
my words plain as water,  
apples, wool, bread, knives.

## TUESDAY

There is never more than one place to be.  
It arrives each time from a different map;  
sun on the moss, my life running  
across my hands like water, pure  
animal that won't be caught.

BURNING THE FRANKENSTEIN MONSTER: ELEGIAC LETTER TO RICHARD DILLARD

It is Henry, as everyone knows, who's really the monster,  
 Not the innocent wistful crazy-quilt of dead flesh  
 We remember as being in love with flowers and children like flowers.  
 It's the will made totally single which frightens us,  
*Monstrum horrendum, informe, ingens, cui lumen ademptum:*  
 Virgil's misshapen eyeless one-eye gone mad  
 And disturbing the fabric of ongoing time. --You were right, Richard,  
 What I mostly ripped off from Rimbaud was the notion of fire  
 As symbolic of tortured, transcendent-striving will.

(But *The Inkling* is long out of print, bemuses not even my mother.  
 Let it smolder to ash on whatever forgotten shelf.)

Why must poor Karloff be born out of fire, and die, fire-fearing,  
 In the fire? Is he truly our dream of Promethean man?  
 Does he warn us of terrible births from atomic furnaces, atomic  
 Centuries, shambling in pain from the rose-scented past?  
 Having been burned and then drowned, reversing the fate of Shelley,  
 The lame monster brings back upon us the inverted weight  
 Of the Romantic Period. Whose children we are, but disinherit,  
 Stranded in decades when all is flame and nothing but flame.

And my vividest memory: light first seen by the monster, pouring  
 Through the roof peeled back little by little, at last  
 Bathing in splendor the seamed unlovable face with its stricken  
 Eyes; and the creature in agony uplifting his hands,  
 Whimpering gutturally, hoping to be drawn up like water vapor  
 Into the full forgiving embrace of the progenitor Sun.  
 What wouldn't we give to undergo in our latter years the virgin  
 Onslaught of light? To be born again into light,  
 To be raised from the grave, rudimentary senses unfolding like flowers  
 In a warm April rainfall... But then they reseal the roof;  
 Little by little his hands drop again to his sides and the brightness  
 Lapses in stone-colored eyes, his mind huddles forlorn.

Henry is watching in barely controlled hysteria, thinking  
 Thoughts inarticulate, biting his rag-like hands.  
 He is a child of the lightning also, of the flash unrepeatable  
 Revelation which blasts and creates in an instant, all.  
 Flash he must follow to destruction, before us melting whitely  
 To madness. Let him then marry, let the wine be fetched  
 Out of the family cellars, the servants giggling like tipsy chickens  
 When the Baron proposes his toast: "A son to the House  
 Of Frankenstein!" --Has he forgotten that Henry already has fathered  
 A son given over to the care of Fritz, dark spirit of Earth?

Fritz is unbearable. Crazy perhaps and certainly turned evil

By reason of fear, it's he who teaches the monster to fear,  
Perverting the light to a means of torture. This troll always scurrying  
Upstairs and down with a torch in his hand is reduced  
Finally to shadow, to shadow hanged and splayed on the prison  
Wall. This is justice, of course, but it horrifies the mad  
Doctor, the sane doctor, and every one of those whose consciences  
Whisper: *The fault is yours, for the dead must bury the dead.*

Return to the lake where the two abandoned children are playing:

Here is no murder, no trial of death upon life.  
Entrancement of naked simplicity washes both the bright faces;  
Pastoral daisies, the currency of joy between two,  
Float in the water; the monster is struggling to utter first laughter.  
Now the sweet daisies are gone, and the hands that had held them ache,  
Tremble with joylessness. Suddenly metaphor is born to the injured  
Criminal brain, and he plucks a final white bloom,  
Launches it silvery drifting. The death of all flowers forever  
Is accomplished. From moist green ground he has plucked his own death.

Nuptials broken... The father in silent dry-eyed accusation

Brings to the wedding the single drowned flower of death...  
(Notice in horror films, Richard, how weddings impendent on science,  
Knowledge unborn, recur. In *Dracula*, *Curse*  
*Of the Demon*, in Freund's *The Mummy*, in Hillyer's *Dracula's*  
*Daughter*, in *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*.  
Hearing "the loud bassoon," but prevented--until we listen  
To Salvation's full passion--the church, we stand aghast.  
Faith calls to faith, but our faith must be earned from terror, consummate  
Love must be thirsted for, light must be wholly desired.)

White-gowned Elizabeth sees in the mirror the wayward monster

(Calendar girl who confronts a medieval death's-head);  
Hears the low growl, a deep rasp as if earth were tearing in tatters;  
Obligingly faints. And the monster her bridegroom lifts  
Her over the threshold, through door after door, but the ritual is empty.  
Only one union is Karloff permitted: to wed  
Terribly the flames, to return to the trauma of being fathered  
Once again, conceived in the raging delirium of fire.

Father and son, they are bound to a wheel of crazed fire.

Father and son, with one instant of recognition between them:

Jagged and hungry the gears that ponderously chew  
The circle, and father and son for a moment pause to examine.  
"You who brought me into this world what have you done?"  
"No. Never you I sired but a healthy longed-for imago."  
"I am but I and I come now to claim my birthright."  
"Born of my will from the grave, for you this world holds nothing."  
"Maker and monster we shall not die apart."

Richard, this world is ever the world the fathers fashioned.

Right and the right to be right belong to dreams  
Not as yet come into flesh. The courageous monsters perish  
Always alone, and yet always in a final light  
Glorious and stark. As the hilltop mill is always burning,  
Raising its arms of clean blaze against the stars.

# THE CHARGE AT LIEGE

The fields are alive  
with screaming men  
Nordics and Alpines and Germanized Slavs  
mixed over the centuries  
into a guttural blend  
of feldgrau.

Children of Goethe and Schiller and Heine  
Sons of Luther mit Gesichtern geheim  
a Hunnish horde caught up  
in a frenzy of mythical lore  
zusammen.

The guns of Liege  
begin their funeral dirge  
and do not cease  
till a wall of bodies  
blocks their way  
in Todesruh'.

Then the sons of the Kaiser  
charge over their kinsmen  
with the cry of everyman  
on their lips  
"Gott mit uns."

WILLIAM  
BURRIS

## AT THE MARNE

The order came  
"Feuer"  
the Swabian gunners  
held their fire, watching  
in amazement  
as the French moved slowly  
line-a-breast  
toward the rim of the hill.

The morning sun  
flashed on brilliant red pantaloons  
marking each target separately  
like flowers in a vase;  
On they came, a scarlet chorus line  
moving stage front center.

The order came again  
"Feuer," "Feuer"  
still they did not fire  
"Mein Gott, Blumensoldaten,  
Wir können doch nicht Kinder schlachten."  
Again, for the third time  
"Feuer"  
Scarlet turned to deep red.  
Flowers in a vase.

WILLIAM  
BURRIS



"Juden heraus, Juden heraus"  
the loud guttural refrain  
sounds down the narrow meanders  
of the Burgstrasse  
called Judenstrasse  
by those who don't live  
in the quarter.

We hide in the dark space  
behind the cellar  
paving stones smash the windows  
in the shop above  
shutters are yanked from their hinges  
and thrown into the street.

There's Willi  
right up front  
he was my friend yesterday  
now he flings the largest stone  
and shouts the loudest,  
"Scheisseköpfe, Yids, Dirty Jews,  
we'll burn you in your holes."

"Juden heraus, Juden heraus"  
the chant fades  
as the mob moves toward the river.  
We come up now  
they're gone  
perhaps I'll see Willi  
in school tomorrow.  
We'll be friends again.

## BIRDS OF PREY

The blue-gray haze  
of the Warsaw sky  
reflects the amber shades  
of the surrounding potato fields,  
casting a pale golden halo  
over the sleeping  
city.

Milk wagons  
lumber through the narrow streets,  
Bakers pull fresh loaves from their ovens,  
School children turn in their attic beds  
to the tune of singing tea kettles  
in the kitchens  
below.

Lovers sleep  
in secret dreams  
of moments lost in the waning hours of summer  
Street lamps fade and die,  
as the ancient jewel of Poland  
awaits the first day  
of September.

To the Northwest  
behind the Bug  
gull-winged formations gather.  
With the dawn  
comes the first somber toll  
of church bells:  
Stukas.

## ELEGY TO A GERMAN LONG DEAD

He hated them all:

bemedaled aristocrats in jackboots  
titans of industry in black sedans  
postal clerks and school masters  
marching in arrogant throngs through the city streets  
women and wives, weeping tears  
and kneeling in praise  
around their feet.

He feared the masses:

unlearned, afraid, prone to violence  
deceived and misled  
by men with pale-gray faces  
shouting aloud their chants and tunes  
in homage to the man  
from the rented  
room.

He loved Germany:

land of music and learning  
of rolling rivers and quiet streams  
of towering mountains and fertile plains  
of market towns and peasant lore  
of class and deference and peace,  
but honor  
more.

Friedrich Percyval Reck-Malleczewen:  
Nobleman, Scholar, Christian, Patriot,  
Genickschuss, at Dachau,  
hands bound, face down  
in the bleak winter snow  
of his native land.  
Remember.

## DER VENUSBERG

Ancient Mountain  
as old as the earth itself  
fortified by the Romans  
against the waring tribes  
coming down from  
the Baltic.

Desecrated  
by the sprawl of a modern city  
nerve clinics where fat Burgers sleep  
and the rich men of Bonn  
seek refuge from the strains  
of politics.

Forgotten now  
in its primeval splendor  
except in the poet's dream  
while the ages of man  
pass by  
in ignorance.

Schönberg  
Beautiful Mountain  
lost to my eye in the Rhenish fogs  
standing away from the river  
to the West  
toward Aachen.

AU BOIS DORMANT

Within a thorn circle  
My love lies

Enclosed there, he my heart, darkness  
Towering above him

Have I sown this darkness, exhaled  
This quickset hedge?

There were old tales would tell, but they  
Are long forgotten

Wide-eyed, scanning the plain that holds us both,  
I hear

My love cry out in his sleep-- "See  
What magic has done"

ELIZABETH SEWELL

THE SPLIT SELF

Given my split self  
This dry age would word me

Clinical diagnoses

So would not I; let me but grope  
Old forms, own forms, to solve

Perceived soul-data

Such the twin sphere-line,  
Day/Night that skims the globe's blue

Alternating eternally

Such the Olmec mask  
Fused in carved stone the gash  
Of jaguar snarl with sobbing babe,

Lacrimae rerum . . .

The first, a life pulse,  
The next, their old saws tell,  
Mystery--a rain god--

Fruit-bringing, propitious.

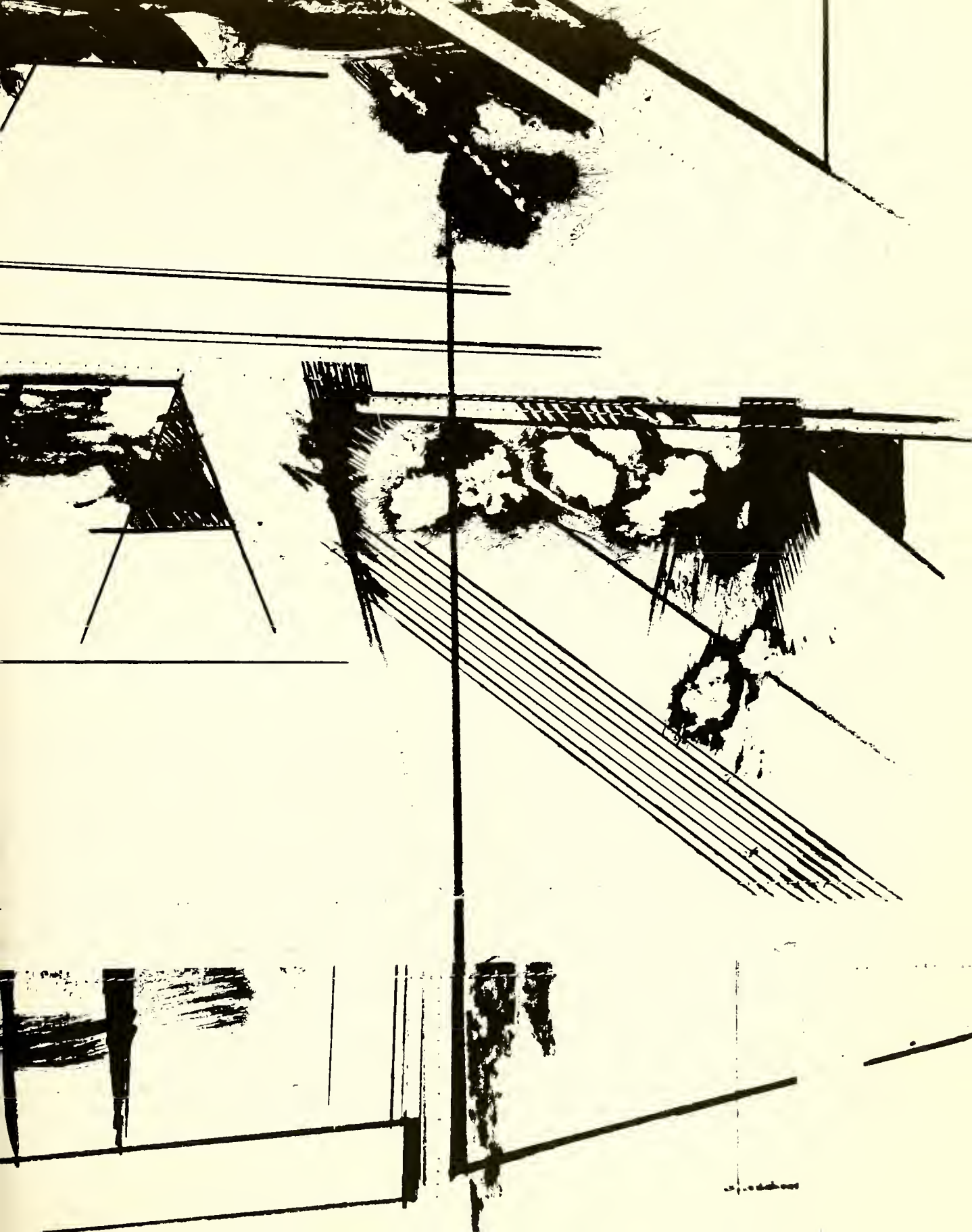
ELIZABETH SEWELL

"teaching-egyptian" (Guilford #1)  
a study; drawing & sewn collage

has its own logic  
influenced by the recent through some  
earlier personal visual system.

Martha Zelt





[An excerpt from a novel in progress]

Valley people do not know the sky. They do not look up. The sun they know from heat on their backs and from shadows cast. But they never look up. They do not see the snow early in fall when it appears strata-like on the mountain peaks. Or feel the cold as the snow moves slowly down. A white ice freezing and turning the tamaracks from evergreen to yellow. But the snow comes. It moves down. Ledge by ledge. Making ledges and strata of cold. Backing up in day, moving forward at night. Lower to the valley floor.

This is not known to the valley people. They feel the season change when a mud rut stiffens under their feet before it gives. When a church-window-like ice forms over the mud. Then and only then do they hurry to scratch one last winter crop out of the soil. Frantically preparing themselves for cold.

In winter the sun is gone. Blanket clouds filter a grey-white light below. And shadows are not seen till March. Again, in spring, the valley people do not see the snow disappear, by ledges, back up the mountainsides. Later, in summer, they do not see the faraway final-ice give way on the peaks. It is the snow at their feet they know. And only that.

"Not long, Mashida. Not long."

Joe Little Plume stood on a small rise watching the west ridge. The horse beside him shifted weight and moved away. Plume waited. The sun was already in the treetops across the valley. Plume watched as the sunlight moved down. In a moment it would touch his face. He waited another moment.

"Now!"

Plume turned and started to run down toward the valley. The horse, still saddled, hesitated.

"Now, Mashida. Now."

The horse pawed and then followed.

"Quick!"

The horse moved faster and Plume let himself go. The short careful steps stretched into leaps as he increased speed down the hillside. He ran hard. Jumping and bounding. Each step larger than the last. He aimed his jumps. Guided them. Avoiding the beargrass the thistles when he could. His aim becoming poorer the faster he moved. He began to slip and slide on the morning dew of the slope, but did not fall. Long steps and longer he took. Racing the sun. Racing the horse. Down. Down to the valley. Toward the fields below. Toward Everitt City in the distance.

Behind him he heard hoofbeats. He turned to look and stumbled. His feet went high and he rolled, but he landed running. Ahead was a fence. He gauged his steps and jumped. One boot he planted between the barbs and the other he lifted high. He landed clear and crumpled to a stop, dragging at his breath. He looked back.

The horse was close, but balked at the fence and began to make nervous trips up and down it. Plume saw the sun in the treetops.

"Hurry, Mashida! It will catch you."

Joe Little Plume ran again when he saw the horse move uphill for a run at the fence. Looking over his shoulder he saw a flash of white as the horse lifted over. He heard the snort as Mashida landed and pulled up. A little later he heard hoofbeats to the right as the horse veered off to follow a dirt road to the valley.

Plume was alone now and glad that he needed no roads, no clear passage.

He ran straight ahead. He broke into the open and moved easy across a long looping saddle in the mountain. His wind was back and he was relaxed. Mashida would gain on him here, he knew that. There was no way around it. But he didn't care. He was relaxed and loose. Over the saddle and that was it. A quick drop to the valley.

It was getting bright around him when he dropped off the saddle. The mountain dipped sharply, straightaway to the valley bottom, only a few steps more.

He dodged and turned in and out of the bushes running zigzag down the hill. He crashed through a pile of brush and found himself straddling a small creek with each step. Slipping and sliding he cursed the low branches and the water at his feet. He put his arms in front of his face and dove straight ahead. A small branch tore at his sleeve. Another cut his hand.

It was close now, the clearing and the valley. He felt good. The sun was behind. He could see that. Where Mashida was he could not tell. He was making too much noise himself.

On his final jump he hooked his boot in a root and fell headlong into the clearing. He landed in a sitting position in the middle of the creek. He cursed in Indian and rolled onto the bank. He leaned back and laughed.

"Hey, sun," he yelled. "Yeah, you." He paused. "Every day, old sun. Every day."

He settled back again and closed his eyes. In a while Mashida trotted up and nuzzled him. Plume rubbed the horse's nose.

"Beat you, horse. Beat you again. You're getting slow, you know that? Yeah. You're slowing down."

He got up and climbed into the saddle. He nudged Mashida down the dirt road toward Potter's place. Behind him the sunlight was coming into the clearing.

*It was the great migration that brought men to the western valleys. The get rich migration for gold. Men came to the Rockies for wealth and freedom; knowing inside that the West would be no different than the eastern world they had left; knowing inside, also, that once they left the East they could never return. Yet they came. Chasing an ignorant man's dream. And arrived in Everitt Valley at the division of the plains and the mountains.*

*At first it was the weak ones who stayed. The ones who had had enough. The merchants who traveled two thousand miles for gold only to learn that they were storekeepers at heart. The farmers who came for a life of ease and found themselves clearing the land.*

*The strong ones laughed and passed them by for the gold fields or the Pacific seeking a life unlike the one they already knew. They had no time for straggler. No time to waste.*

*But the weak ones stayed and others kept coming. In time the fifty mile length of Everitt Valley was white populated (the Indians they pacified and stored in the upper valley away from the fertile land). And all along the Everitt River people lived and raised their families.*

"INDIANS!!" Potter shouted.

Plume smiled and dismounted.

"Hide the booze and get the gun!"

Plume walked into the house.

"War party?" Potter asked. He held a rifle ready.

"Ahhh, gimme some coffee."

Plume sat down at the table. Potter went to the door to check. Nobody else was in sight. He came back and put the rifle on the table.

"Yeah," Potter said. "Okay." He leaned into the back room. "Hey,



Lorraine! Bring this breed a cup."

A small Indian woman moved silently into the kitchen. She went about her business quickly, avoiding Joe Little Plume's eyes. When she was through she drifted out again. Joe Little Plume watched as Lorraine left. Potter noticed.

"Lorraine?" Potter said. "Yeah, she's around. You know that." He paused. "Hell, you been here. Happens all the time."

Plume nodded and drank. Potter went for a refill of his own cup.

"Win today?" he asked.

Plume nodded.

"Figures. Man can beat a horse on a hillside. No self respecting horse is gonna bust himself up just trying to beat time. Never happen. A guy, though, you know what? A guy's just got no sense. Hell, he'll go pizzle end upward just to say he got there first. Dumb. Real dumb. A guy's got no sense." Potter paused and waited for Plume to comment. Plume didn't look up.

Potter went on. "A man can outrun a horse if he's a mind to, but, you know," he paused again as he thought about it, "The sun. Yeah, the sun, that's something else. Man can't hardly tangle with that." He walked to the window.

"I beat."

"Today. Maybe even tomorrow. You got a long time yet." Potter put his hands in his hip pockets and leaned against the wall. He kept looking out. "But you know, Plume, one of these days that old sun's gonna find you flat out in the open and there you'll be. Wide open. Looking for excuses." He paused again. "Yeah. That sun's something else."

They did not talk for a while. Plume looked around the room. Boxes and crates were strewn about.

"You leaving?"

"Yeah."

"Oh." Plume settled back.

"Well, hell, Plume, I gotta. Her husband's gonna pay me a visit. Yeah, Koaly. The bastard. Got it by the vine. Yep, it's time to clear out." He walked back to the table. "That's why this." Potter touched the rifle and then shoved it out of his reach. "Dammit, Plume, it's a tough time when a man can't even trust his friends. Everybody is everybody's relative around here, you know that. Everybody. Even you, I bet. Bet you're related to her, too."

"Cousin."

"Ya see? Ya see? Everybody. Dammit, a man can't live like that, Plume. It's getting to me." He leaned against the stove and rolled himself a cigarette.

Plume shifted uneasily. He watched the coffee grounds roll around the bottom of his cup.

"But you know what, Plume? You know what? This time she's coming along. Yeah, this time Lorraine's going along. No more of that hiding out. I'm through."

Potter let it settle in.

For the first time since he had arrived Plume looked directly at Potter. Potter wasn't able to hold the gaze.

"Okay," Potter said. "It's a dumb move. You know it and I know it. But that's the way I've figured it and that's it." He paused. "And what the hell's a white guy doing on the reservation anyway? That's what I'm asking myself. What the hell am I doing here anyway?"

Plume pushed away from the table and walked out onto the porch. He sat down and patted Mashida's flank as the horse grazed on the tall grass next to the building.

"Hey," Potter yelled following Plume out. "Just like that, eh? Just like that you quit listening?"

"No. Thinking."



"Thinking? Well, don't do too much of that. That's what I been doing.

Gets to you."

Potter watched Plume pull a burr from Mashida's leg.

"What about?"

"What?"

"You. What you thinking about, Plume?"

"Oh. Koaly."

"Listen. He thinks he's got a lease on her. Treats her like hell, that's what he does. Beats on her. She tells me about it."

"Koaly won't like it."

"The hell with him. Who cares? Yeah. Who cares? All I know is he's not getting at her again. No more." Potter caught himself getting worked up. He slapped Plume's shoulder. "Hey, what am I running off about? It's not you I have to worry about."

Plume tore a splinter off the step.

"You know what?" he asked after a long pause. "I learned something, Plume. I really learned something. I learned to like that woman. Like her a lot." He paused again. "Yeah, I know. That's dumb, too. But that's what's happening and we're taking off."

"Where to?"

"Damned if I know. Been living reservation to reservation my whole damned life. I'm more Indian than you, if you want the truth. Nah, I don't know where we'll go. Just comes a time when you've got to up and leave, that's all."

Lorraine was loading the Chevrolet at the side of the building. Potter got up and helped her with a bushel of apples. Then he leaned against the car and watched her work. He kicked the fender. Mud clumps fell out.

"Hope this old hoopee'll get us to white man's land," Potter grinned patting the hood. "Remember that time we had to push her down the highway?"

Plume smiled. He remembered. It had been a black kind of night. Cars moving by kicking up rocks. The two of them singing an old Indian song which Potter didn't know, but could fake.

"We ever finish that bottle?" Potter asked.

Plume nodded. "Got some more, too."

"I'll be damned."

Potter laughed loud and Mashida shied. Plume calmed the horse and then turned to leave. Potter walked up and offered his hand.

"Hey, Indian. Guess this is it." Potter paused. "Damned if I'm gonna write to a redskin." He laughed again. "You and me, Plume, well, we know how it was and if, well, if we get together sometime, well, dammit, just remember to bring a bottle."

Plume nodded and rode out.

"Don't forget the bottle," Potter called after him.

Plume didn't look back. He could hear Lorraine barking at Potter for not doing his share. He kicked Mashida into a slow run.

*Everitt Valley people are like most. They make their way from the earth. It is a stoop shouldered race they are. Living their lives watching the dirty black-brown dirt at their feet.*

*They, like the other valley people, seize the creeks and streams of snow-sourced water as they descend to them from the divide and irrigate them in strands across their land, muddying up their black-brown dirt. They sift from these creeks what they can and then turn the rest back into the streams. From that point they see*

them empty into the Everitt River which runs the length of the valley. Then they forget. They don't know that their homestead water rolls through the plains to the Forks and then to the Missouri. They do not know that it becomes muddy in the Mississippi or that it is carried into the gulf. They do not care. And they do not know that their clear winter-water slides across a continent and becomes a salt ocean brine. Or that years later it might return again to Everitt peaks. The valley people would not recognize it. And do not care. They trust to gravity and the slant of the earth. They care not for things above.

The horse slowed to a walk when they reached the highway. Without a nudge, Mashida turned and followed the ditch toward home. Now and then he stopped to graze.

Sitting on the horse's back, Plume waited for the horse to move on. There was no hurry now. The race was finished and he had seen Potter. There had been no need to warn Potter about Koaly's anger. Reservation hatreds traveled fast. He watched as the cars passed by. Once in a while someone would wave. If he recognized the car he waved back.

Near Sam Light's place he hopped off to clear a culvert. Ordinarily the government was paid to keep the highway from flooding, but they seldom came. Plume took a long stick and cleaned the mud out and rolled a rock away. When the water was draining again he rode on.

"There he is! Get him!"

A pickup whined up beside Plume and slid to a stop. Several men jumped out and surrounded him. One of them, Jim Foot, grabbed Mashida's reins and held on.

"Where you going, Joe?" Foot asked.

"Home."

"Yeah? Well, suppose you tell us where you been."

Plume looked at the Indian faces around him.

"Where's Koaly?"

"Around."

Plume looked around again and tried to see who was driving the pickup. The shadows in the cab hid the man's face. The driver had a bottle, though. Plume could tell that. And he could see that the others were day-drunk, too. He reached for Mashida's reins.

"Let go."

"You haven't told us where you been, Plume. You tell us that and we'll let go."

"Kobler's Hill."

"Racing the sun? Yeah, I heard about you and the hill. Think you're something, don't you? Think you're a real Indian." Foot paused and turned toward the pickup. "Hey, Koaly, this breed thinks he's an Indian."

There was a grunt and laughter from the pickup.

Plume jumped from the saddle and tore Jim Foot free from the reins. He began to swing, hitting Foot again and again as fast and hard as he could. Mashida bolted and broke through the ring. A short distance away the horse turned and watched. They were on Plume now. All of them. Blood began to run from cuts on his face.

"Hit him over the head. Let's get him away from the highway where we can do it right."

Leonard Sure Chief picked up a rock and moved toward Plume. The others held Plume rigid. Sure Chief hesitated. The two men looked at one another.

"Come on," Foot said. "Do it."

Plume felt sorry for his friend Sure Chief.

"It's okay," he said.

"No. You do it." Sure Chief handed the rock to Foot.

Foot let go of Plume's arm and grabbed the rock. He grinned and lifted the rock high above him. As he brought the rock down he felt a quick deep pain in his groin where Plume kicked him. He shrieked and doubled. Plume fell limp.

"Get him in the back," Koaly said from the cab. "Let's get out of here."

Foot hobbled over and climbed in front with Koaly. The others carried Plume and dumped him in the back. They hopped in beside him.

Sure Chief stayed in the ditch. "I'm gonna get the horse," he said.

"Come on!" Koaly yelled.

"That's what I want." Sure Chief pointed at Mashida standing a short distance away.

"You coming?"

"I'm gonna get the horse."

Koaly dropped the pickup in gear and rolled away. In the back the others laughed and pointed as they watched Sure Chief disappear over a rise chasing Mashida.

*It was in the twenties that Carl Everitt came to the valley. By then the rush was over and the valley had begun to adopt eastern ways. There was no longer any romantic search for riches. The men merely worked. It was as it had been before. And small towns grew in the valley.*

*Carl Everitt came to the valley, but not for gold. Consumption and sickness drove him there. He came to the valley for his life. He was a small man, quick and energetic. And though his health returned in the new climate (he had come from Indiana) throughout his life he remained the fatless, face-sharp man.*

*He tried prospecting, of course. Everybody did. He failed. Then he turned to logging and lumber and found his fortune. For prospecting is a solitary venture and Carl was a leader, an involuntary leader. One of those men who leads unconsciously. He found that men would work for him. And set up the Everitt Lumber Yard.*

*In a matter of months he was wealthy and could have been powerful if he had had an inclination, but he made no pretense to authority. The lumber outfit was his, that was true, and the men worked for wages, but there was no difference between them. Carl Everitt worked with the men on the line. He did the work they did. It never occurred to him that ownership implied any sort of leisure or that he was separate. He had worked all his life and there was no difference now. It was simply that he owned the lumber yard. The men did not envy him nor did he expect them to. It was a man's way of life. Satisfactory and respectable.*

"Roll him out and stick his head in the ditch. That'll wake him up."

Koaly walked about in the shaded area near town. There was a house across the field, but with the brush between them no one could see. There wouldn't be any traffic, either. Since the new highway few people used the old road.

Foot and some of the others carried Plume from the truck. They dropped him heavily into the irrigation ditch and laughed when he choked and sputtered awake. He tried to get up and they pushed him back. Finally he worked himself onto the bank.

"You about ready to tell where you been?" Koaly asked.

"No."

"Get him, Foot."

Foot grinned and stepped forward.

"Hold him," he said. "Hold him down and spread his legs."

They pinned Plume to the ground and pulled his legs spread eagle.



"Wider! I want a good shot."

They stretched his legs more.

"Where they at? I don't want to miss."

One of the men pulled Plume's levis close about his groin.

"Yeah. That's better." Foot paused and looked at Plume. "You talking?"

Plume struggled, but they held him tight. Foot moved closer and placed the heel of his boot gently between Plume's legs. Slowly he pushed forward until Plume jerked in pain.

"I owe you," Foot said. "I owe you."

He kicked hard and Plume pulled away. He doubled and tears rolled. He did not cry out.

"That'll hold him for a while," Koaly said. He moved closer and knelt beside Plume. "Where were you?" No answer. "Potter's?" No answer.

Koaly was about to let Foot back at Plume when Plume nodded slowly.

"You tell Potter about me?"

Plume shook his head.

"No?"

"He already knew."

"He did, huh. And who told him?"

Koaly stood up. He was mad.

"Get him, Foot."

Foot kicked Plume hard on the side of the head and he fell unconscious.

Koaly looked around.

"Pour a little booze on him," he said. "Let the white guys finish it up."

Foot emptied a wine bottle on Plume's face and shirt. The red of the wine blended with the mud and blood of Plume's face. Together the colors ran back behind his ears.

"Come on."

*Before the thirties the Everitt Lumber Yard was the primary industry in the valley and Carl Everitt a name known. No one can now remember the name of the valley before (some Indian might, but nobody thought to ask), but it does not matter, for the county records (which also became Everitt County) definitely show that in the fall of 1928, a mere seven years from the day Carl arrived, the valley was officially called Everitt Valley. And though he had come late in the valley's history, Carl Everitt in his seventy years had become one of the valley people.*



SEPARATION

Together they had flown with the sun westward  
(flame-feathered skies from San Francisco  
to Honolulu and one day dropped  
like a knitter's stitch before Tokyo)  
to this new this ancient this timeless India.

From the day of the letter poetic dreams  
of heroic dedication had inspired  
prosaic preparations:  
leaves of absence from pedagogical duties  
to be exchanged for leaves of the banyan  
for sheesham and sandalwood  
project-briefings inspired and practical  
study of bold outlines for months ahead  
shots to thwart all things preventable  
(but none for culture-shock or elusive amoebae  
no provision for the uninvited guest  
Entamoeba Hystalitica).

So yesterday brought them goodbyes  
choking on dust as it swallowed the plane  
returning him alone to Nur Manzil  
oasis for dessicated psyches  
thirsting for familiar fountains.

UNDISCIPLINED THOUGHTS IN MEETING

Time is where one is  
and what is happening:  
Sitting in Delhi, here in Quaker House,  
I listen to the chatter of the birds;  
the sun is high, the soul awake,  
and thoughts are fluttering  
before they find their place  
within the harmony.

Steam-roller rolling by  
has been in India  
so long it trumpets like an elephant;  
too many bullocks pulling tire-less wheels  
will soon destroy the asphalt road  
prepared for auto tread;  
but people from the past  
repair incessantly.

MARY FEAGINS

Jet engines overhead  
do not disturb the cows  
that hump along the nullah searching grass.  
What time is told by man and woman here  
who lift together baskets full  
of dirt onto her head  
for her to bear alone  
and scatter up the road?

Time is circular:  
those heavy silver rings  
around her ankles, rubbing calluses,  
and infinitely coiled turban on his head  
return my mind to ages past  
and bring me back again  
to where I am today  
and what is happening.

## FOR THE DARKROOM

### I

Subject to his moment and object of his verb  
climbing the Delhi street on his horizon  
she grows assuming her breasts and light limbs  
with her awareness of his stare.

Motionless appraiser from his perch near the curb  
opening shutters wide of his brown visage  
he focuses follows reeling her in  
relentlessly to his somewhere.

### II

Growing old she contemplates while passing  
him by he will be sitting there his stare  
directed calmly into horizons  
each yielding snapshots for his lair--

she wondering whether her memories  
of brown men will dominate her album  
Delhi dedicated herself exposed  
to brief encounters caught in some.

## MOMENT

Having learned once and for all  
she cannot own souls--even her own  
of which her words are spun--she collects moments  
this moment a precious gem among her treasures  
as she alone on Delhi roof seeks  
a few degrees of coolness in a gray dawn.

Not quite alone: countless parrots flying overhead  
gossip loudly of their night in Lodhi Park;  
a copper-coated dachshund solitary and yawning  
on high porch wall waits for movement on his roof  
from sleepers on charpoys; a dhoti-clad squatter  
in a field below in the Karbala across the road  
behind a wall and in tall grass  
meditates a puff of gray smoke rising  
to the endless dome of his privy en plein air.

A pair of two-toned crows identical share one limb  
of the neem tree large beak of one stroking neck  
of the other apparently both male--appropriate  
in India where hand-holding and arm-stroking  
are publicly masculine; bees swarming  
on a limb nearby buzz Monroe Doctrines  
and distances are kept.

Only a sparrow  
one bird the same  
in Carolina or in Delhi  
hops on the ledge before her  
and really looks at her  
before he flies away.

One moment that is all then starting up  
from string-beds varicolored figures  
folding their sheets wrapping saris or dhotis  
disturb the roofs on Cezanne-planed horizons.  
Dung smoke flowing from chimneys  
or from braziers in open yards  
greets the sun seeking entrance through gray  
into her moment of pearl changing to opal  
fiery opal reflected on earth's floors.  
But its rays will not penetrate today  
the dust of Delhi clouding her soul  
from the moment of his absence  
for as long as he must stay  
away.

"October 5, 1976 - Instructions to the Printer"

Glue these 3 curved and straight pieces of mat board on a piece of 8 x 10 paper so that two of them are as close together as they can be without touching each other. Place the other piece as far away from the first two as you can. Don't let any of the 3 pieces touch the edge of the paper.

Photograph and reproduce them for the Guilford Review.

Thanks.

Adele Groulx

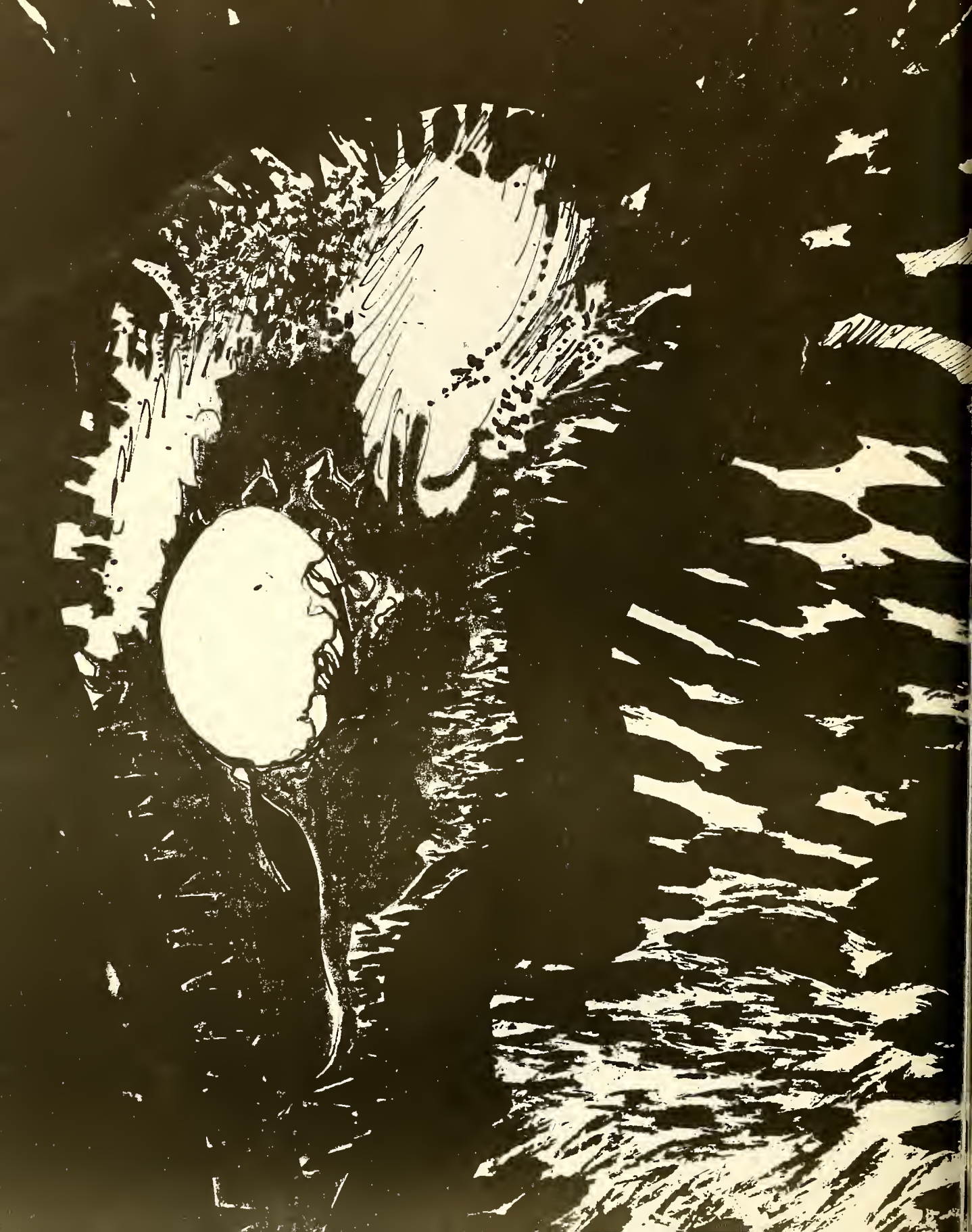
Note from the Printer:

It is constructed of vanishings, of masses dwindling  
each into its proper absence, out of the convergence  
of surge and stress composed by the launching of line  
toward the inconceivable Edge

["That shady nothing out of which the world was made"  
said TRAHERNE, knowing its MAKER to be All in all]  
which, on the Mountain, is that inch nearest the brink  
whereon my foot FEARS most to step,  
for the place whereon I'd stand  
is Holy Ground.







## REFUGE

In a large room with white curtains, soft pillows, and a carafe of wine  
 I can watch the lights of the harbor in the house of a kind stranger  
 and loaf like an honored guest while the jangling Japanese glasses  
 chatter like women and children in a wind that promises rain.

It is comfortable to be honored; to sleep on sheets with a pattern,  
 to eat as much as one pleases, to drink more than one should,  
 to sit in a chair while the harbor suffuses its lights for dreaming,  
 to watch the last of the ferries wind soporifically home.

I will be journeying onward at the white plume of the moon;  
 all that I own I can carry: an umbrella and an old rice bowl,  
 a book or two and a straw hat, a pencil, a toothbrush,  
 warm socks, maybe a picture or two, a smooth, old bamboo flute.

I toast you, Monsieur Delacroix, Lautrec, Renoir and Seurat.  
 How well you hang on the walls, away from the jangling wind.  
 Comfort, of course, is deceiving: the fly in the ointment of knowledge;  
 like the satin cocoon of a corpse. The soul's rest is striving.

While living we must practice dying; let the wind take us,  
 let the full moon haunt us, alone on a country road,  
 only cicada to cheer us, and the wild, flung-out tapestry of stars,  
 the kindness of strangers remembered: ghost faces talking in a fire.

To know the ebbing and flowing is all we may know of living;  
 to keep the heart in its fullness, no matter the winnowing course;  
 to build us temples of loving and leave them behind as we wander:  
 refuges for strangers, places to dwell and be nourished.

The lights of the harbor are ruby through the glass of the decanter.  
 Half of a blood-shot eye, the moon peeps out of its lids.  
 All arriving is leaving, sing the Japanese of the glasses.  
 Moving, we dance into loving, sings the ruby wine of my blood.

## LOVE MAKES US STRANGERS TO OURSELVES

1.  
 There is this place  
 a hundred miles around;  
 the wind's my breath,  
 my body's all the ground.  
 God leans to earth;  
 I hear His breathing sound.

2.  
 There is this woman.  
 Imagine all the rest  
 a pleasant kind of motion  
 to curve around her breast.

## INTENSIVE CARE: FOR MY GRANDMOTHER

CHUCK SULLIVAN

From your grave  
West Wing bed you raise  
the grounded body within  
your pale grandmother's gown  
and greet me with the outstretched  
tube-stuck relics of your  
already twice-anointed hands

And I touch the Last Rites  
of dying love blessed  
in my oldest living flesh  
and blood pared by prayer  
to the bone of God's ghostly will  
reaching out to me in your  
soul's thin grip that binds me  
in the black knots of tumor-hollow beads  
that ring your Rosary's unfinished Mysteries

To which you cling  
while whispering to me  
in a voice stroked to  
the Spirit's pure whisper  
that, although the doctors  
are still in the dark, you  
are in the best of hands  
because last night out of  
St. Francis' clear blue sky

Michael the Archangel  
came to you in a dream  
and carried you away  
on cure-bright wings  
to the perpetual light's  
heaven-sprung fire of intensive  
care in which the Precious Blood  
glows in the healing fountain  
of forever mounting flames

warming to life  
the wintered hearts  
of all the faithful departed

## HOW REFLEX ACTION WORKS

If by chance you  
hold your heart

over the heat  
of a candle

burning at  
both ends

what happens is  
that in getting

under the skin  
the flames send

a lightning message  
to the spinal cord

where the interlace  
of nerve and motor touch

to rush the news  
to the muscles

which in turn contract  
and the heart jerks back

just like any other reflex act



ENDING IT ALL: FOR ANNE SEXTON

Most players  
are weak  
in the ending

even though  
the middle game  
is full of  
sound and fury

When behind complicate  
When ahead simplify

Most players  
are weak  
in the ending

but you, having studied  
many past rook  
and pawn finals

you knew, all too well,  
a tricky strength or two  
and pained to keep your cool

in the heated match  
of always reflecting ahead  
in constant remembrance

of the board's being  
as the checkered mirror  
of your moves

and dominion of  
the final phase  
lies in the deadly

precise technique of  
a master who, in the tact  
of planned surprise,

unveils a style laced  
with the fatal verse  
of nursing mad advantage  
into checkmate in the endgame

AN ICY FLOURISH: FOR JOHN BERRYMAN

One final  
stone cold  
sober Friday

John Berryman  
on a bridge  
between the east  
and west campuses

acting beneath  
a slant sun  
stripped off  
his overcoat

and mounted a  
January railing  
from which he in  
an icy flourish fell

or was pushed onto  
the still shiver  
of grace unbroken  
upon the face of the  
frozen river below

Where found among his  
personal effects were  
one pair of smashed

professorial spectacles  
and the unsigned lines  
of a crumpled blank check

which for the moment  
as far as the investigating  
officers could see  
was the only note he left

## AMERICA

"America is something out of this world. It is a luxury that the world cannot afford, although up to now it has been willing to tolerate it.

---A young man in Zamora, Spain

## THE AMERICAN

"For me," said the young Spaniard, "the typical American is the *Negrero*--the Southern Planter cracking his whip over the slaves. The Americans keep telling us the Russians are wicked, but I honestly believe they are morally superior to the Americans. If anyone still doubts the depravity of the United States, just look at Viet Nam."

---A young man in Zamora, Spain

## AMERICAN MUSIC

Zaragoza, Spain, was founded in 23 B.C. by Caesar Augustus, and it boasts a section of Roman wall and a fine old Roman bridge. Overshadowing all is the great Basilica of the Virgen del Pilar, to which thousands of pilgrims came today. Even so, as I make these notes the radio is featuring American hard rock music, and it sounds just as bad in Zaragoza as it does in Greensboro.

---Zaragoza, Spain, June 29, 1976

## THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

At Evora, Portugal, my charming young seat-mate wanted to show me the nearby cemetery during the bus stop. It was a mass of white marble tombs with paved streets and gorgeous flowers. To please her I took a picture. Yet, somehow, I was haunted by the squalor of the gypsies camping in a public park, and the obviously modest circumstances of many residents of Evora.

With more than a touch of irony, I remarked to Carmen: "They really take good care of the *dead* in this town, don't they?" No sooner had I spoken than I realized my mistake, for Carmencita was from Badajoz, Spain, a very traditional town. How could she, in twenty summers, be expected to be analytical on a subject that had been closed for a thousand years? She looked puzzled. The dead *deserved* their marble temples.

---Lisbon, June 10, 1976

## A FRENCH JOURNALIST

On the bleak station platform at Guarda, Portugal, I spoke to a bearded young man loaded down with heavy photographic gear. He was obviously a foreigner, but when I addressed him in English, he demurred. I tried Spanish, Portuguese...

"Non, monsieur," he responded, "français..."

So I had to muster my meager French. As it turned out, M. Valls was the son of a Spanish Civil War refugee who settled in France and married a Frenchwoman. He himself was a journalist covering the Portuguese political situation after several months in Africa. As a native Frenchman, he had never learned Spanish, and like all Frenchmen contended that without any question Paris was "la capitale du monde."

When M. Valls' father was still in Spain fighting Franco, I was a student in America reading appeals in the *New Republic* for volunteers to defend the Spanish Republic.

#### IN SEARCH OF UNAMUNO

I looked up my old friend Miguel de Unamuno today. Well removed from his ancient university, at the bottom of a hill and in a dusty corner of the street, I found the modernistic bronze bust of this remarkable man for whom I had traveled to Salamanca. Unlike the sycophants who filled Spain with monuments and plaques praising the Generalissimo, Unamuno never regarded Franco to be the "saviour" of Spain. Indeed, the venerable rector of the University of Salamanca served the ill-fated Republic, and afterward went to live--and die--in France. Still, from his obscure corner in Salamanca, he emerges the victor. Today, Salamanca and all Spain honor the memory of Miguel de Unamuno, while the entire nation deliriously celebrates the end of the forty-year Franco dictatorship.

---Salamanca, Spain, June 18, 1976

#### CENTER CITY

Center City is alive and well in Salamanca--as it is in Madrid, Barcelona, and all over Spain. All day and late into the night people throng into the streets and gather at the many parks and plazas, frequent the restaurants and bars, and sip coffee at the sidewalk cafes. The center of it all here in Salamanca is the Plaza Mayer, a magnificent paved square covering a whole city block and surrounded by ornate buildings completed twenty years before the American Revolution. It is teeming with people at night and busy during the afternoon. It is a whole different way of life. The American occupies his time away from work mowing his lawn or repairing the plumbing--or maybe traveling many miles to play golf or engage in some other "leisure" activity. The Salamantino, on the other hand, has his whole world near his high-rise downtown apartment. He simply takes the elevator down to the street level and strolls out to spend many happy hours every day drinking, sipping coffee and swapping yarns with his neighbors.

---Salamanca, Spain, June 18, 1976

#### CHERRIES, CHERRIES

I was not overjoyed to learn that my collateral ancestor, Johannes Hilty, had paid a 10-franc fine for "illegal sale of cherries" in Bubendorf, Switzerland, in 1825. When I went to the Wildenstein Estate near Bubendorf in 1976 to visit the place where Johannes lived, I ran into a great bustle of activity: a crew of workers had come out from Basel and was busily engaged in--picking cherries!

---Badajez, Spain, June 8, 1976

American embassies in Europe managed to work up considerable interest in the American Bicentennial during 1976. In the Prado Museum in Madrid, a typed message on the wall informs the visitor that Goya's famous *Maja Desnuda* has been loaned to the United States for the Bicentennial. Nevertheless, one suspects that sometimes the interest is accompanied by a yawn on a continent where all American history is regarded as mere current events. Was there a touch of malice in the decision of the City of Merida (Emerita Augusta) to celebrate its two thousandth anniversary this year? For sale among other trinkets in a store in Badajez I noticed a handsome medal struck off to honor the Bimillennial Anniversary of Merida.

---Badajez, Spain, June 8, 1976

## EL BUNKER

To understand Spain today one must understand the esoteric use made in that country of the German word *Bunker*. It is used to describe the old establishment, the members of the Franco government and all the other francophiles who want to leave everything as it is. So much do they believe in the past that they are holed up in their ideological bunkers, confident in its reinforced concrete and taking pot-shots at anyone who sallies forth with a new idea. Every literate Spaniard knows what *El Bunker* is and can name some of its occupants. Mostly, they think they can simply go around them and leave them there playing with their toy guns.

In other words, the Old Order is irrelevant, and the rush of events is ushering in a New Age. Salvador de Madariaga, Ramon Sender, and a dozen other celebrities returned in the summer of '76 to be lionized by their fellow-countrymen after forty years of exile. They are now old men--and women. The mayor of Moscow toured Spain, and labor leaders visited Cuba. Spanish Communists attended European conclaves.

But cavalier treatment of *El Bunker* is not limited to Spain. In Strasbourg, France, I visited the Council of Europe which nourishes the hopes of a war-weary continent intent upon establishing the conditions for a durable peace. A small book published by the Council describes the basic condition as "cultural democracy." And what is cultural democracy? Is it easier access to opera and museums? No, cultural democracy turns out to be nothing less than a recognition of the Ortegan *Rebellion de las masas*. No longer will esthetes wring their hands at the reluctance of the masses to embrace ballet, but instead an honest effort will be made to find out what the masses want--and give it to them. The key word now will not be "noblesse oblige" but rather the right of Mr. Average Man to "do his own thing--not the boss's thing."

In other words, north of the Pyrenees the Bunker has already been abandoned. To be precise about it, it was abandoned in the aftermath of the riots in France in 1968. Today, "the sole rationale of any government is that it shall encompass the health, wealth and happiness of the masses of the people." The Council urges profound reforms in education in order to embrace the broadest scope of "useful" and "in demand" programs. The frustrated political hopes of 1848 come to fruition in 1968 in a democratized culture.

There is considerable evidence that all this is not mere rhetoric but reflects an attitude of important sectors of society, especially the young.



It is hard to get to Eden--  
 The road, Rosetti, does  
 wind uphill all the way,  
 and though neither rain nor sleet  
 nor gloom of night stay  
 these couriers, they stay  
 thy Pilgrim, Bunyan, from  
 this Celestial City. There  
 are no signs to speak of  
 such existence, to point  
 Paradise-ward. Possibly the  
 rain has doused the East Gate's  
 flaming sword. Could it be  
 your mythic origin that  
 impedes discovery? Or is it  
 that only those who lose  
 their way and ask find you?

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## THE JOURNEY

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What was there about a pointing star  
 and frosted blue light night  
 that led three ancient Persian Magi  
 to load their gifts on desert ships  
 and wander westward seeking miracles?

Wise men have always known at heart  
 that bread must be cast upon the  
 seas or sands and wisdom is often  
 best discovered in a bed of hay,  
 that knowing may be missed in oracles.

This is the night for paradox and mystery:  
 for sandaled feet to run through snow and  
 sleighs to course through sanded wastes,  
 for stars to point to babes in villages  
 and treasures be unwrapped to innocence.

The mystery was always there, Limberlost girl,  
luring you up hip-slogging sloughs,  
through groves of cypress knees, and  
avenues of sky-high trees to follow--past  
all belief in phosphorescent accident  
or dazed preoccupation  
with the enigmatic mellobug,  
spinning his perfect circle of futility.

I too once knew the mystery  
but hardly the unravelling.  
Could I unravel Spanish moss?  
Or reach to touch the blue  
through tips of giant trees?  
Or fathom breathing knees?  
Or teach deerflies and moccasins  
my right of equal residency?

We both have known the mystery.  
The water moves and is black with it,  
calling and beckoning into its fastnesses,  
where I surmise resides at least one  
small primordial clue or the possibility  
of two--one for me and one for you.

## POMEGRANATE

In still-life you emanate mystery,  
Recalling equally a bulb, a root,  
A sachet vase from ancient Araby--  
Sheer exotica in a flesh-red suit.  
To unlock you, I must desecrate you,  
See you bleed, magenta, suck the winy  
Liquor from your fleshy seeds--to know too  
Why Hades gave you to Persephone.  
For in that nether world of memory,  
Where Lethe's waters bear off everything,  
Must lodge some sight or touch or fantasy,  
Forgotten but for your remembering.  
Taste and recall, Eternity and time,  
Cupped for a poet's pittance in my rhyme.

## STOP THIEF

Someone has been here  
while I was away  
waiting for my porridge to cool--  
There are signs.  
I was delayed.  
So many paths to be taken  
and not taken  
birches to be swung from.  
Sappy as the sappiest sapling  
in a wood filled with  
nymphs and satyrs  
flitting creatures  
I followed  
or was led  
curious and half-charmed  
on  
and in a way back--  
to  
my porridge bowl--empty  
my chair--broken  
my bed--slept in  
my invader--fled.  
But I am a big bear now;  
I must not cry.

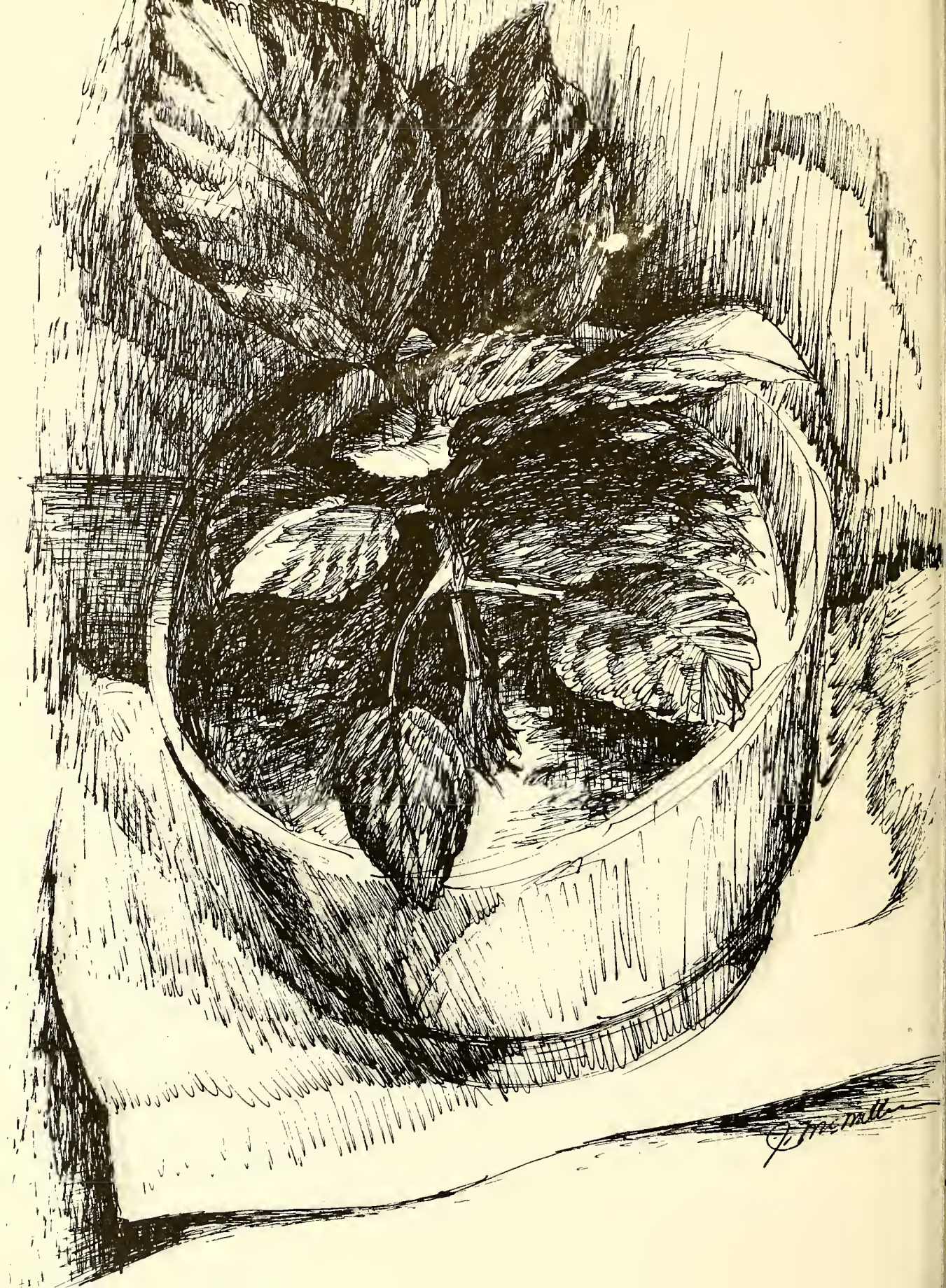
## COALESCENCE

You are the youth of my age  
my child out of due season  
my last convulsive leap  
toward immortality.

You are my complement  
as I am yours--  
the tartness and the ripeness  
of our fruit.

You are the wind-lift  
of my soaring spirit.  
I am the tower  
and the lights of home.







[Excerpts from a novel in progress]

I'll tell you what, he had said finally, when the pretty-faced girl of soft-brunette bangs had suggested that they really should be "going on," if they were not going to be "too late" getting to the "there" that neither one of them ever named or elaborated upon--I'll tell you what: they were planning something down in St. George, a weekend get together, sort of house-party affair in honor of the first regatta of spring, and he, Tom, would be in touch with me about it. But how? I wrote it out for him: "Corporal Perse Arden, US53--and the rest of it--after six o'clock or so, the casual barracks section of a Headquarters and Headquarters Company in such-and-such a detachment of a battalion of a regiment at Fort Harden." And then, if it can be believed, I waited inside all those concentricities--Perse the minotaur, was it?--at my end of the circuits, the Bell system's peculiar inversion of the Ariadnean thread--or maybe I was simply myself another inversion or perversion of Arachne. But you can't really push with a filament (even in starting a needle there's got to be a pull through from the "other" side at some time) any more than you can really shove your arm against a wall, without a seated complex balling inward somewhere in the frame of things. Try simply inching a matchbox, say, across even a smooth flat surface by steady prods of a rubber band. Machinations are deceptive by definition, or at least in connotation.

You can, however, or I could, anyway, place myself more immediately at the one end or center of things: even a paper outfit army company has what is known as a Charge of Quarters and an orderly room for him to sit in nightly, a telephone for him to answer in the proscribed manner, a barracks round for him to make from dusk to dawn at regulated intervals to see that the firelights are yet burning, that cooks and kitchen police are awakened--that kind of thing will be going on in the army garrison, you imagine, even when the barbarians are sacking the nearby city streets. He, the C Q, is even provided with an orderly room cot and can actually earn himself a few dollars by taking the duty off the roster for those men who believe they have more urgent business elsewhere to take care of. And I had taken up the strategy of offering my services that way for its many advantages, no later than the day after raising Tom in Gottlieb's: Leamon had been down to eight days and a breakfast then, and counting, of course; but in less than twelve hours after my first out-of-turn service as C.Q., I had preempted even the momentary status he might seem to occupy at his three day point, becoming myself in the eyes of many in the casual barracks and in a few beyond those, even unto Headquarters barracks at the top of the company street, a sort of fool or savior or goodly friar or shyster. This last, as much if not more than any of the other labels, because when you do what at least looks like a favor for another man, even what he himself has come petitioning for, even when he might have protested--as I had some of them all maladroitly in mid-barter to protest on occasion and yet I stoically refrained from using the protestation as leverage to gouge deeper--that the remuneration you ask is too little, too paltry, a mere trifle, considering what they envisioned as their sure gain by your agreeing to substitute for them, even then, I say, you run the risk of being called shyster, if not initially, then eventually, simply by virtue of the peculiar nature of the deal. What you are offering a man, making available to him through your very person, amounts to a kind of cut-rate ubiquity. It's a highly limited variety of ubiquity, I grant; but God knows it comes cheap: three bucks, five at the most (ten for a weekend's supply of it), a carton or so of smokes--once a pint of Jack Daniels Green Label and only one pack. But the jeopardy on your side was always a dimly realized sense of the road not taken.

On the other party's part, that is. And I never knew what switchback turnings that sense might lurch to in his head, whether it added a dash of piquancy to what he was actually allowed to in the flesh because he'd found me to fill what would otherwise have been his shoes elsewhere, shoes he could envision in dull, dusty pace carrying through a desolate night check along the company street, even while he looped about or rocked or swung giddily in some saddle somewhere and so could breathe "There but for the Grace of God, etc., etc."--or whether in some bedroom, or along the length of some empty street or around some mirthless table, my blithely aloof phantom figure, salaciously smacking its lips over the traded booze or cigarettes or fondling the wretched bills, weren't becoming an object of sullen distrust on the edge of some slow brain slag of remorse gathering over the inexorably withering into ashes of a bright anticipation, a ruination that my rankling stand-in figure had made possible of realization.

Sometimes I thought about a contractual form, mimeographed, dotted lines and all, drawn up to cover the situations. But it would have been difficult to draft. Perhaps if I had included some phrase about how after the initial liberation of the party of the second part, fulfillment of the swap required that both parties keep each other out of mind, or maybe just mentioned how I was waiting for a call myself, it would have helped. Yet I doubt it. Some things you can't lay against.

But there were a number of other developments stemming from my having set up in that line of trade, anyway. And one of these, after you got into the swing of the thing, was, if not exactly forgetting, at least not bothering to remember certainly why it was you'd taken it up in the first place--your original impetus, so to say. And there was a hang to it.

Finance companies, for example, will often wait until after Retreat before activating their overtures toward the objects of their searches on an army reservation; and I had gone after a soldier at the behest of a voice resonant with decent concern about contacting him over the dire straits of his mother--I had actually summoned him lathered in shaving cream, only to have him end up talking to the Acme Man about his arrears, before I began to cull incoming emergencies of that kidney. They were, in fact, obvious. The agencies must have used a set form: "I"--the speaker, sometimes a woman, would say--"(earnestly, very much, devoutly) (hope, desire, pray) you've got a \_\_\_\_\_ there in your (organization, company, outfit). I've been (requested, asked, begged--I had one say "importuned") by his (sister, mother, aunt, uncle, etc.) to contact him about the state of (whoever strikes you as nearest and dearest)'s (health, condition, well-being)." It was that couched, usually. And I had one that winged it, with only a little limping, as far as a priest having been sent for. The tipoff was that he sounded as if he had seen the same movie I had a hundred times, under a hundred different titles (like the wasted side of beef over the side of the ship running so slowly that the frames blipped by) and he was asking after none other than Strach, whom I knew of course; and who, I believed, if he had a mother at all, that is, if he had been born and not issued, would not have one of the Catholic persuasion. Besides it was a foregone conclusion that he, Strach, wouldn't have been there. It was nearly dark. I denied his existence at least thrice. But it nagged me, naturally. And on my two o'clock round I was relieved to happen on him, appearing to have just made it in, swaying on his firmly planted feet, but canted a little backwards from his hips up, a lone lowly muttering figure before the troughlike urinal of the casual barracks latrine, battle ribbons and medallions aglitter under the unshaded bare bulb light.

"You again," he said, listing sideways. I had come up on his good side; and when he turned his face full on me, the thrown eye kept bouncing off the wall. "What's the Goddamnit to hell up no-hows--ain' no coll-lage poon?"

"You don't have a mother, do you?" I said. I honestly hadn't meant it as anything. It simply came out that way. Blurted. "That is, that is, I hope you don't,"

I tried to recover, making it worse somehow.

He had blinked the briefest second; the fished away eye frozen on the buff-colored, blank wall above the trickling trough, its pupil a fixed uncomprehending aperture, as if bent on a faint, invisible, huge scrawl of graffiti: "Sh--sh--sh--yo--you--" his knob-knuckled hands fisted. I thought, the son-of-a-bitch is going to hit me, getting my own hands up at about the same time as he came up off the floor.

And I mean, he left it: both feet. I must have been a half-head taller than Strach, but I remember his face, for a single suspended moment as dead on level with my own, saw it there, that is, past the intruding blur of his coming fist; for from up there, his left arm snapped back, only the right shot straight out, like a reciprocating of springs, and it was all I could do to twist enough so that most of the punch was only a good mouth-bunching sideswipe. Even so my head jangled a moment and I tasted blood and with numbed tongue felt the startling, shredded texture of cut inner lips. Somehow, he'd spun around with the part miss and I grappled hold of him from behind, both my arms wrapped around his, trying to keep them pinned, while he pitched a series of those off the floor springs, each one rattling my teeth at the come down, racking my head back. I remember trying to talk to him: "For Christ's sakes, Strach. Easy. Easy," and the pound of our feet scrabbling over the gritty floor. Of his feet mainly. Mine were only slamming down toe-first about every third buck.

I was a welter of indecisions: first I would love to have ridden his electric, coiling, bunched-backed narrowness smashingly into the wall, or at least hammered home a few blows to the back of his obdurate and still over-sea capped skull. But I was afraid to let go of him in order to try. And, then, too, I was sorry: it seemed my fault. And I was also idiotically concerned about how a C.Q. oughtn't to start a row in the latrine, and in all of this, we kept whirling and scuffle-footing around. "Hush. Shhhh. Whoa. Shut up. Strach. Be quiet, now." That kind of thing was all I could manage, while he was cursing himself in only hoarse whispers, picking it up from my tone, I believe. Finally we arrived before the array of wash basins, each with its individual mirror along the wall opposite the trough, looking at each other's face through various sets of these.

I remember the ice-age eye seeming to knife in on my own glance from different but fixed angles. "You're bleeding all over my Goddamn shirt," he said. It was true. Fresh scarlet blotches of my own blood were spreading out like melted blobs of a hot red candlewax, viscous and resolidifying on the wash-whitened khaki beneath my gaze.

"Finance company," I said. "Car. Not your mother. Car."

"What?"

By degrees, still clutching him closely, through the mutual transfixations of mirrors, I got the story told.

. . . . .

The very two o'clock check that I was carrying out, when I saw Strach-- it wasn't even called for. I could have gotten by without it. A dusk check and then coming down through the barracks to roust a cook or a k.p., as I've said, about 3:30 or 4:00 would have been more than enough. It was just a rhythm I'd fallen into, probably getting eight hours of sleep out of the twenty-four; but in naps, anymore, during the day at the supply room, when I could catch Leamon off the volley balls behind the cubicled rack, or in the early evenings, from about 8:00 to 11:00 or so, dozing and reading on the cot in the orderly room. And then a last stretch from about 4:00 to reveille. It was like slipping into a schedule of eating only when you were hungry: without having to worry about preparing anything before you could restore yourself, or as if the restorative were reservoired, right there embodied in yourself and you



needed nothing more than to lower yourself into it, just by dint of a kind of relaxation. I sometimes believed I could have slipped into it horse or mule fashion, standing. But sleep is strange anyway. You hear about how it comes upon you more demandingly in the winter, like a slowing brush with something older and unshakable, in an insistent pluckishness at your sleeve, or how there are waves of it, currents riding from shelvey lapses to unbottomed heavy deep oscillate rolls--and on the two o'clock walk around I used to wonder where everyone was with it, at what stage or range. The huge two story barracks looming on both sides of the company street like night barns or the stilled darkened halks of freighters burning lights fore and aft, something like those we used to row quietly past, coming in from flounder gigging, where they were hawsered in the darkened roads, down in Port Carol.

And within the barracks, down along their double decked aisles, there was the smell of it, sleep, of its making. Harborish itself, a faintly tidal smell of lived among skin, of shoe released and sock unencased feet, distantly ataint with a dark drift of scent from a far pluff mud bank or night point where pelicans gather, so reminiscent that when I passed the flashlight along the tiered bunkheads, looking for a scheduled cook or k.p., I could feel a slight start when the beam picked out the knotted white towel they used to mark their places. And waking a man from sleep, a stipulated man like that, isn't the same as turning on the overhead light, spieling out "Reveille, Reveille, Reveille," like a train conductor and then clattering away before anyone even groggily spots you. You have to wait for an individual, lending him your light, holding it for him, to dress and gather his articles by, the two of you talking in only low tones, conspiratorially. And if you have been through, as I would have been, at the earlier hour of two o'clock, finding his place before the later call that you would pay to awaken him, you might think about the minutes or hour or so yet remaining to him where he had been last left, from wherever it was that you, yourself, might have gotten to meanwhile. And they woke up differently. You were never sure of what to expect. Sometimes in a start, coming upright, even crying out; sometimes as easily and gently as if they had not really been asleep--or were not now awake, one. "Dease? Are you awake, Dease?" "Yeah. Yeah. Thanks. I'm awake," or "It's all right, Semoza. It's all right. Just the C.Q. It's 3:30," uttered as softly as you could manage and still hope to get across to a startled, amazed countenance astruggle with unarticulate sounds.

I don't mean I ever felt quite clinical about it. The night duty prompted a more fuguelike thoughtfulness, than the merely clinical. In waking the men, I recalled the one costumed Halloween party I had ever attended in my life. It was during the fall that I was enrolled in Cocohran's Renaissance Seminar. (You may remember, I've mentioned him and having to bear up under the orangutan pun.) Well, I got the inspirational idea of dressing as a headsman, getting up a hooded half-face mask out of an old knit shirt, tacking together a foil wrapped piece of cardboard as an axe. The upshot is, that I walked to the party, borrowed leotards (black, of course) and all, not planning or thinking about exhibitionism, but just going to get there and the result was I got the only real insight I've ever had into masks--or the headsman's, anyway. (Maybe the only insight I had the entire semester into anything, for that matter.) It was a fair walk, through a number of residential neighborhoods. There were children out all over the streets, gobbling about in the October twilight and first dark that was falling. And you can believe it or not, but it became a near refrain as I passed them: "You can come in here," the little beggars would shout, damn near chant, "Hay, mister, you can come in here." The thing was, I fell into the clip of it, riding boots and all, striding past: I had an address at which to arrive--and it came down on me about that particular mask. Dense or not, I'd always thought the axemen wore it to cover themselves; for anonymity. But it was for identity; the identity of anonymity, if that makes any sense. A kind of self-effacement into a presence



that everyone recognized; and it was black, the get-up was black, not for mourning, or sobriety; but as a sort of materialization of its transfiguring impenetrability under or before which the headsman's name was no more or no less incidental than any man's and by donning that office he was standing terribly within, not without, a common pale. What the punctuality of his seeming presence on the scaffold was all about was as likely to occur as keenly to himself as to anybody else; in fact, doubly so in its humanization. Or that had struck me as at least possible, as I stepped on along by the calling children, myself another anthropological filling-in of an otherwise darkness. And it was with a kindred sense to that passing realization, that I'd walk along a barracks aisle on the two o'clock in the morning round, through the steeping or lightening sleep smell of the long vascularities, silent aviaries and beached kelps, locating the appointments and then coming back out to finish the round in what was supposed to be the common place that I would waken them to; for according to the aphorism, Greek, I think, those awake share the same world. But it was possible to wonder about even that.

. . . . .

The tent was Sthaël's idea or Hagood's or theirs jointly, but the article itself belonged to Mr. Early, and, therefore, though not at the moment he and I slipped inside the front flaps, it would be for sale. Eventually. Like so much else that was on the place--but I don't remember thinking about that factor then, so much as I think about it now. But that is the kind of day it was, a day of what invites squints, considering what was to develop in the course of it, of carping over beards, and of suffering numbing twinges at vague levels of sensibility. Remembered, when I remember it, with special intonations, reverberations, that gyrate from strange polytonics to stranger ones; gone back over in my mind sometimes as if it were the landscape of dream. I know that it was the removed earth, a fastidiously conserved heap of it, that Hagood was working over, and that the rain had both troubled and enlivened hers and Sthaël's activities. And I knew that what had been removed, whether conventionally or not, had been held to a minimum; for the bones or the remains lay in a relative shallow and not in the cleared, gravelike pit I had expected.

In the greenish gloom, swarmy within the wettened fabric walls and ceiling with the smell of the turned ground that roiled up to mingle with a tarpaulinish sail-locker redolence--and the smell, too, of crushed, bruised, yellowing grasses--the first glimpse of the bones I got, ducking in, was of the face. The outside light flickered across it; then, as the flaps fell back, it was once more engulfed by the suffused light of the gloom. It was cocked up. A good portion aft the coronal suture either dissolved or fallen in and propped atop the jaw, which looked unhinged: it had the exact properties of a mask. "Look here. We need some light on the subject," Mr. Early brushed back outside, furled the flap, so that a swatch of sunshine, like a fore-shortened pinnacle, fell across the worked earth in which, piecemealed, fragilely ramshackle and lank, like the outbuildings beyond the house, the bones lay, as within a sunken form, such as you see left by a sleeping father, "buried alive" to the tune that alternates between gigglings and solemn, sand-patted concentrations of silence, by his tykes on the strand, with the surface area all about the form a trampled maze of tracks, showing that the old man had risen at last and that everyone had milled around, then walked away from the spot together, the kids no doubt prancing. Where the frame branched at the pelvis, there was a ridged inverted "V", untrodden, so that looked at ventrally, the pelvis itself seemed momentarily a separately unearthed form, not of bone, but of an olden grayish ashened crucible, gone papery, eaten out symmetrically

by molten ores long ago run off down the runneled chutes where the frail thighs, shins and sheafed feet reposed--or it looked two-eared, like a concaved shattered jug or bowl or cup, its involucre heat-eroded. And the thing was, you felt you could span everything with your hand, that there was nothing but seemed crafted on some cleverly reduced scale, as of certain hand-fashionings that in some other frame of reference, by virtue of contextual trickery, would seem life or larger-than-life size, as if it were a cache left by some delicately off-beat band of dwarf musicians, say a woodwind--a flute or a bassoon--a timbrel, a tabor, or a broken pot or two and a curved cormorne, and an unstrung shoulder-harp; a banjo or lute or ukulele or two, of shrunken, condensed head, strewn around with insertible and removable frets like tiny archways; a few reeds and rattles and a xylophonic disassemblage, devised like a miniature foot-bridge; and throughout there were subtly wrought little mallets for percussing the recondite chords amid eerie permutations of notes, a shivaree of bumps and oblique and hovering whiffles and sounds from shaken, gusseted sacks of metals, murmurous kettlings and jaunty perorating whistles. And numbers of fragmented little things, small, light, airy things, like precious trifles that would go trinketing your fingers and palms, spangle out chinking clashes as you danced. And in the hollows, dampened and moistly asleep, as lain with the implements of song or dance and discovered like a wet-bottomed, unlidded customed case or trunk built so purposefully and then interred secretly by the disbanding mummer troupe, only the one compartment was entirely empty, vacant of any of the delicacy that lay shanked and shanking along the troughs of the others, as though revealing that one of the bunch, truant or mutinous or unresigned, had bolted from the decision or concensus and kept his instruments of the art out, gone his own way; continuing in some lonely, unaccompanied noise, serenade or thump. And it was as Mr. Early had said, where the right arm from shoulder to elbow, elbow to wrist, wrist to fingertip should have been--there was nothing.

"That was this boy's death," he surmised, pointing to the absence.

Inside St. Mark's  
the plundered columns rise  
burning with history,  
each ravaged from some fallen shrine,  
their marble veined  
as flesh.  
Here to God's nest  
decade on decade  
beaked galleys veered and sank  
low-laden with  
gnawed bones of pagan temples  
to prop their faith.

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So now I  
with wattled throat and naked eye  
mark down my ruined lovers,  
rummage their carrion to fill  
these gilded reliquaries--  
like any poet  
pillage my past,  
like any Christian  
consecrate the spoil.

# JIGSAW PUZZLE

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"Ici commence li livres du graunt Caam"  
Marco departs from Venice on my table:  
that gush of merchantry and years  
splattered to fragments like all history,  
the painter's seeing sawn to crazy shapes,  
a therapy of touch and color. Piece  
by piece St. Mark's lofts up the gilded four  
horses, the doge's palace furbishes  
its colonnades, below in the piazzetta  
a butcher hawks magenta carcasses  
(so interlock church, state, and our deep-dyed  
carnality), and undergirding all  
like grace, the Adriatic's blue pervasion.  
Marco takes ship with blessings and rich freight;  
across the foreground's brief foreshortened sea  
lions couch in the heraldic wild.

Traveler, the world you pieced together  
from far-flung segments of your life, now curls  
at edges: carmine, saffron, verdigris  
brown into speculation. All our launchings  
confirm that the Grand Khan is dead. Design  
lingers only in shapes, in colors, touch  
and turning. Year by year we reconstruct  
these tedious puzzles, these tedious poems.

I

Ellen enters the pool:  
eleven, breastless she breasts the water  
her sutured heart powerful as surf  
(below her nipple the red cicatrice  
remembers intensive care).

Splashes close her eyes, she shouts

Marco . . .

the writhing children plunge,  
scatter, their round mouths answer

Polo . . . Polo . . .

She launches blind  
through the liquid sounds  
catching at her childhood.

II

Face down on this glass-bottomed bed I map  
sunken Venice, luminous through  
layered aquamarine. The girl  
Elena enters the church of San Marco:  
maidens swirl about her, pearls  
entwine her emerald hair.  
Inside the nave phosphorescent as  
a sea-cave candles waver, the round  
notes of choirboys surface like bubbles.  
Nicolo Polo takes his bride.  
She will name their son Marco.

III

And was he like a god  
who entered you, got you with child,  
cast off for Constantinople, visited  
the court of the Grand Khan, and like  
Odysseus lingered twenty years?  
Penelope had choices. Yours dissolved  
in that first rending childbirth when  
the flesh canal ran water, blood, and your  
fresh life into the brackish grave.  
Venice, where every burial is  
a putting to sea.



IV

Face up in the embrace of stone you age.  
Brine condenses on your lashes like  
crystalline coronals, your eyes awash  
inside the liquifying skull; your skin  
paler than beauty wrinkles in the saline  
secrecy of the vault.

Marco full grown  
greeted his father at the wharf. Of all  
his merchantry the fairest bargain this,  
and most Venetian: a woman for a son.  
Not the doge only  
marries the sea.

7  
Ellen, Elena, sisters, we are wed  
to an interior and bloody sea.  
We take its tides to realms exotic as  
Marco's extravagances, hazard there  
our damask bodies.

Ellen, daughter,  
the scalpel has made you perfect, arch your  
perfect body downward, plunge past  
heraldic Venice wreathed in tentacles,  
sea-caves and mermen, past the glimmering past,  
lower than color, luminescence, tide--  
where in dark-standing deep  
egg-laden hulks  
celebrate their soundless nuptials.

BEFORE SWINE

Nights when  
the boar intrudes  
his tusks uproot  
flimsy wardrobes  
of folded babies.  
I fend him off  
with butter knives.  
Outside the house  
in regiments  
Poland China  
hogs stand.

Is it because  
behind somnolent  
facades of Venice  
a grunting midwife  
hooks her catch  
red as a lobster  
drops into basin  
decants from glazed  
casement whereunder  
the monastery swine  
of St. Anthony of Padua  
quest among  
the husks of melon  
some pinker fruit . . .

# THE WATER BABIES

for Andrea

## I

A young girl with a man's name  
she stares into the fishbowl, dreams.  
Small thoughts, tremulous, golden,  
dart and hover in her eyes'  
luminous acqua. Microscopic  
threads of cells like eels, like dragons,  
drift continually down. Her vision  
becomes a vision: in island kingdoms  
along blue frescoed halls she swirls  
bare-breasted, heavy-skinned, her arms  
wreathed in snakes.

## II

Those other women behind your eyes--  
that child fingering a cowrie shell,  
she presses it against her cheek, hard  
as a man's mouth. It leaves a tiny  
slash of red. Through the circular  
Byzantine window like a saint she watches  
workmen drain the doge's fishpond.  
Ancient and succulent the gilt-scaled  
carp roil. She is fourteen.  
Already the tailed sperm have swum her.  
Something slow and lidless  
fattens in her depths. Tomorrow  
the eel-fishers will find her  
snarled to the pilings along  
the Grand Canal.

## III

We have borne our daughters.  
Now we are pregnant again, round  
with all the gone children, the girls  
dredged up from quarries, snagged  
by barge men under the bridges,  
gone to sea down the wells.  
They have swum up inside us.  
We cannot get it through our heads  
that they are ours. We get it through  
our bodies. We bear down.  
We thrust into the arched light  
their slimed and precious bodies,  
the drowned love, the drowned loveliness.

1

Inside the mantel's dark proscenium  
I lay crumpled saffron first-drafts down  
in a fine strategy. You enter, bent  
under windfall branches, hefting  
one fungus-encrusted log. A match  
lights up the scene. Crisp beetles,  
twirling spiders make their small  
ascensions. Our blood applauds.  
Everything burns. Everyone. I and you.

2

We lie in sleepingbags beside the hearth  
stacked for winter, all our heat  
cylindrical and contained. Your pupils  
break my white face to white water:  
logs cascade into a narrows, jam.  
A lumber-jack strains at his pike. I  
notice the logs have open eyes, arms  
chained around their bodies, legs together,  
mouths half open to the foaming air--  
hundreds together, thousands gone down stream,  
millions up river dropping one by one  
into the current. I the lumber-jack  
boot on bellies pike thrusting heave  
riding the shift and stagger to slip  
stiffening under the sullen rout.

3

Could I give you such espousal as  
between the doge in Venice and the sea--  
gondolas canopied with petaled light  
peeled chestnuts red wine roses the gold ring  
jeweled with holywater incense prayers  
that pure high arc of gold into the waves  
perfect as rainbow . . . Yet the sea eats  
Venice with her fine teeth like any shrew.

Marrying each other we wed  
in colder course. Inexorable winter  
thaws to inexorable spring. Felled,  
stripped, we bound together in this sluice  
marrying a weather, a direction:  
bleak, swift, separate, downstream.

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CHUCK SULLIVAN teaches poetry in the schools for the state of South Carolina. His poems have appeared in such magazines as ESQUIRE, SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW, and SOUTHERN VOICES. His first collection of poetry is entitled VANISHING SPECIES.

MARTHA ZELT teaches Printmaking, Photography, and Art History at Guilford College. She has had numerous one-woman shows and is represented in several national collections, including the Philadelphia Museum of Art and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts. Her work is now being shown in the Brooklyn Museum in an exhibit of 100 American Printmakers.

CREATIVE PROCESS IN THE ARTS AND SCIENCES

Sept. 8	REX ADELBERGER (Physics)	Time Zero: Creative Process in the Natural World
15	JOHN STONEBURNER (Religious Studies)	What Is Our Milieu? Human Creativity and Some Ancient and Modern Cosmologies
22	HEIDI YOCKEY (Humanistic Studies)	Coming to Meet: Self Expression through Active Imagination
29	ADELE GROULX (Art)	A Watercolor Workshop: the Process of Visual Expression MEETING IN ART STUDIO, NEW FOUNDERS HALL
Oct. 6	BETTY ADCOCK (Visiting Poet)	Writing Workshop: Creative Process in Poetry
15	RUDY GORDH & ELWOOD PARKER (Math)	Creative Process in Mathematics: A Dialog of Methods MEETING IN KING 122
27	BILL BEIDLER (Intercultural Studies)	The Tao of Creativity
Nov. 3	DAVE MacINNES & TED BENFEY (Chemistry)	Observation and Inspiration MEETING IN KING 122
10	MARVIN LAMB (Visiting Composer)	Creative Process in Musical Composition
17	RICHIE ZWEIGENHAFT (Psychology)	Psychology and Creativity: Wrestling with a Greased Pig

WEDNESDAYS AT 3:30 IN THE GALLERY OF NEW FOUNDERS HALL, GUILFORD COLLEGE







# **GUILFORD REVIEW**

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# GUILFORD REVIEW



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## P R E F A C E

This issue of the GUILFORD REVIEW centers on Creative Process in the Arts and Sciences, and is drawn in part from talks given during the fall Colloquium. As in past issues, faculty contributors have been joined by visiting artists--Coleman Barks, Gary Corseri, Marvin Lamb, Elizabeth Sewell. In addition, a member of the Board of Trustees, Walter Blass, and several Guilford alumni are represented. It is our hope that the REVIEW may continue to bring together scholars and artists in a variety of fields to share their ideas on issues of humane import.

Ann Deagon, Editor

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Chemistry is a strange hybrid. Whitehead pointed to the prerequisites of good science--an equal passion for rational order and the careful observation of brute facts. Now, biology tends to have a multitude of observables to organize and physicists spend much of their time in theoretical and mathematical cogitation. Chemistry--between biology and physics--seems to be the balanced science--facts and theories carry an equal weight. Biologists find us too abstract, physicists consider us muddled by the endless miscellany of isolated bits of information.

We look at or gather related facts, similar items of information. We create bits of order, small domains of rationality, in the faith that some day the little domains will be seen by a greater mind as fitting together in a larger jigsaw puzzle, part of a larger pattern--or is it a larger design?

Boyle studied gases to disprove a latter-day Aristotelian who refused to believe in a vacuum. When he looked at the pressure and volume data, they appeared to him to fit a simple mathematical law--whatever the volume is, the pressure on that amount of gas is such that the pressure multiplied by the volume never changes its value. Double the pressure, the volume reduces to half; triple it, the volume is down to a third. Independently, Charles and Gay Lussac showed that volume and temperature are related, though in a different way. For every degree Celsius rise in temperature, the volume of a gas expands by  $1/273$  of what its volume is at the freezing point of water. Some time in the 19th century someone dreamed up a theoretical model which made both Boyle's and the Charles-Gay-Lussac Law a necessary consequence of a set of basic assumptions. These assumptions were that gases are composed of minute particles in a vast sea of empty space and they bounce into each other and into the walls of the container like billiard balls.

Thus we have at the base a set of observations, above them a layer of laws and above them, theories. Which comes first? Any one of them may generate the others.

How does the human brain make these jumps from one layer to another--from theories, to laws, to observations or the reverse? Chemistry is the realm of interaction of ideas and chemicals. Here are some examples of reports given by chemists telling how they hit on their revolutionary contributions:

1) August Kekulé, who once had hoped to become an architect, tells how the world of atoms in organic chemical formulas suddenly one day was reduced to order:

"During my stay in London I resided for a considerable time in Clapham Road in the neighborhood of the Common. I frequently, however, spent my evenings with my friend Hugo Miller at Islington, at the opposite end of the metropolis. We talked of many things, but most often of our beloved chemistry. One fine summer evening I was returning by the last bus, 'outside' as usual, through the deserted streets of the city, which are at other times so full of life. I fell into a reverie, and lo, the atoms were gamboling before my eyes! Whenever, hitherto, these diminutive beings had appeared to me, they had always been in motion; but up to that time I had never been able to discern the nature of their motion. Now, however, I saw how, frequently, two smaller atoms united to form a pair; how a larger one embraced the two smaller ones; how still larger ones kept hold of three or even four of the smaller; whilst the whole kept whirling in a giddy dance. I saw how the larger ones formed a chain, dragging the smaller ones after them but only at the ends of the chain. . . .

The cry of the conductor: 'Clapham Road,' awakened me from my dreaming; but I spent a part of the night in putting on paper at least sketches of these dream forms. This was the origin of the 'Structural Theory'..."

2) Seven years later Kekulé explained the benzene ring structure by a vision of a snake biting its tail:

"I was sitting writing at my textbook but the work did not progress; my thoughts were elsewhere. I turned my chair to the fire and dozed. Again the atoms were gamboling before my eyes. This time the smaller groups kept modestly in the background. My mental eye, rendered more acute by repeated visions of the kind, could now distinguish larger structures of manifold conformation: long rows, sometimes more closely fitted together, all twining and twisting in snake-like motion. But look! What was that? One of the snakes had seized hold of its own tail, and the form whirled mockingly before my eyes. As if by a flash of lightning I awoke; and this time also I spent the rest of the night in working out the consequences of the hypothesis.

"Let us learn to dream, gentlemen, then perhaps we shall find the truth. But let us beware of publishing our dreams till they have been tested by the waking understanding."

3) Archibald Couper, trained in classical languages, saw the same chemical formulas that had puzzled Kekulé as if they were words of a foreign language which he proceeded to decipher.

4) Alfred Werner, who applied Kekulé's molecular architecture ideas to the chemistry of metals hit upon the answer to his puzzles in the middle of one night:

"The inspiration came to him like a flash," related Werner's one-time student and colleague Paul Pfeiffer. "One morning at two o'clock he awoke with a start: the long sought solution of this problem had lodged in his brain. He arose from his bed and by five o'clock in the afternoon the essential points of the coordination theory were achieved."

The consequences of the theory kept Werner and his students occupied for decades thereafter.

Jaques Hadamard, studying the process of creativity in mathematics, suggests there is the phase of incubation, of absorption in the puzzle, the insight--that comes only to the prepared mind--then the conscious elaboration, and finally testing of the idea to see if it really can be put forward as a contribution to the world of understanding. The proposal has been made that the subconscious endlessly generates new ideas, but only those ideas with a semblance of possible success in solving the problem break through to our consciousness.

J. H. van't Hoff, in 1874, proposed that the bonds from a carbon atom to its neighbors were arranged in space pointing to the corners of a triangular pyramid, a tetrahedron. He was immediately accused by Hermann Kolbe of reverting to the gobble-de-gook of the middle ages:

"A Dr. J. H. van't Hoff, employed at the School of Veterinary Medicine at Utrecht, finds, so it seems, exact chemical research not to his taste. He has thought it more convenient to mount Pegasus (borrowed, no doubt, from the Veterinary School) and to proclaim in his 'La Chimie dans L'Espace' how on his daring flight to the chemical Parnassus the atoms appeared to be arranged in space. . . . To criticise this paper in any detail is impossible because the play of the imagination completely forsakes the solid ground of fact and is quite incomprehensible to the sober chemist."

For his inaugural speech, when van't Hoff was called from his post at the veterinary school to become professor at the University of Amsterdam, he chose as his title "The Role of the Imagination in Science." He wanted to explore to what

extent the great scientists of the past had used their imagination rather than clinging to the "solid ground of fact." He read more than 200 biographies of scientists and sought for evidence of imaginative power both in healthy and pathological manifestations. For the former he looked for artistic powers such as painting, poetry and story telling, and found 52 persons or 26 percent who clearly showed these powers of the imagination. Among them were Ampère, Boyle, Copernicus, Davy, Descartes, Faraday, Galileo, Halley, Kepler, Leonardo, Linnaeus, Newton, Pascal, Tycho Brahe, Volta and Watt.

As pathological expressions of the imagination van't Hoff cited examples of "the strangest imaginings, superstitions, belief in spirits, hallucinations and insanity." Here he finds Newton again and Kepler, Davy, Descartes, Boyle, Priestley and nine others.

Van't Hoff concludes that imaginative power was present in most if not all great scientists of the past. From the evidence that many were creative in the arts or showed signs of mental instability due to their imaginative powers he is encouraged to believe that the same imagination was needed to make the mental leaps from the known into the scientifically unknown. He suggests that in the future less imagination may be needed because of the large increase in the number of scientists, thus making possible the exploration of numerous possible answers and finding the right one by trial and error. For the great leaps forward, however, the creative imagination will probably always be needed.

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THE OWL PELLET

At tree level owl and professor blink  
yellow noon, doze in the musty  
hollow of tree and office, ruffle  
dreaming of things furry astir by dark.  
Below on Founders' steps two boys  
dissect the pellet from the owl's late hunt,  
catalogue the indigestible  
debris of bone, claw, fur, one perfect skull  
its jaw askew, recognizably rat.

Young friends, you are on the track: classify,  
enumerate, set down in your tablets  
THE OWL HAS MADE A POEM, THE GREY PROFESSOR  
HAS VOMITED HER HUNT. I will analyze  
my latest for you: this image, students,  
is carved from Gloria Spoletti's thighbone  
unforgettable for twenty years;  
here juts the profile of a blind black boy  
seen from a passing streetcar, there the hump  
of my old crippled fencing-master, rotten  
with all unanswered letters. When the greedy  
guzzle of living sates us and the bones  
stick in our craw--we cough up a poem.  
It clears our throat if not our consciences.

So go, boys, and do you likewise.  
Learn the wisdom of the owl professor:  
FLY OPEN-GULLET INTO THE DARK,  
BOLT DOWN WHATEVER SCURRIES.  
Noontime's time enough to cull  
the skeleton from the feast.

('The Owl Pellet' first appeared in SOUTHERN POETRY REVIEW.  
'Through Ripley's Window' first appeared in POETRY NORTHWEST.)



Hananuma Masakichi  
striving for God  
carved his own image  
from a mirror in wood.

Today stands perfected  
gawked at by tourists  
revolves on a platform  
believe it or not.

Japan's greatest sculptor  
spurned to be mortal  
planted his hair roots  
into the wood.

Grafted his skin  
onto the dummy.  
Teeth, nails, and eyeballs,  
whatever he could.

Old friends betrayed him.  
Mocked at his folly.  
Proud Hananuma  
too vain to die.

Friendship is silken  
as cobwebs in winter.  
Love is a flower  
of snow in the spring.

Art is forever  
just idle chatter.  
Nothing lasts always.  
Not even the wind.

God's in the making.  
God's the imparted.  
Whatever fades whatever  
fades into something.

He built himself outward  
to see what was mortal.  
Until there was nothing  
and nowhere to stand.

Look at him she says how incredible he must have been crazy  
he must have been some kind of nut who would want to do a thing  
like that practically to immolate himself to cut himself up  
like that his own skin his own body was he on drugs didn't it  
hurt him now tell me what it means she says you tell me what  
it's all supposed to prove I think it's all a lot of bull she says  
I think it's just a hoax.

The composer of music is often asked to describe his work. The rather difficult task of responding to this request usually takes the form of public lectures given in conjunction with a recital of his music, program notes and essays written by him or interviews. These forms of description at their best generate insight into the work or works under discussion. It is possible that they can also generate insight into the creative process governing his total output. This serves a purpose that is two-fold. First it gives the listener some insight into a particular craft of music composition, thereby improving his perception and understanding of the work employing that craft. Secondly, it gives the composer an excellent opportunity for examining his methods, as well as motives used in writing music. The forms of description, then, become statements by and about composers that give real meaning to Boretz and Cone's phrase "'the personality of the composer'--as opposed to the 'composer as a personality'". The personality emerges [in these descriptive procedures] through the relation of the composer to his craft."<sup>1</sup> However, in applying one of these descriptive procedures to a description of "the creative process in music composition," the composer reaches an impasse. As stated earlier, the procedure describes the personality of a composer ("the quality or fact of being a particular person"<sup>2</sup>) by examining his craft. Therefore, a singular defined creative process will do little more than imply universals that perhaps make up this creative process. This frustration of defining universal characteristics is not, however, without its rewards. The independence of thought, multiplicity of music "systems" and semi-autonomy of today's music craftsmen is primarily what makes much of modern music such an exciting experience.

In examining the music that I have written in the past five years, I find that the "creative process" centers around the realization of two areas of expression that are found to some degree in all my music, past and present. The two areas have been and continue to be somewhat of a problem in that they represent a dichotomy of musical thought. I have tried for some time now to reconcile an improvisatory, freedom of expression idea with the idea of pre-determined compositional order or structure. I began to make some real progress on this reconciliation idea with the composition in 1975 of a chamber work commissioned by James Houlik and Friends Chamber Ensemble, Frames:Focus Variations on a Set of Babbitt's for tenor saxophone, oboe, clarinet and piano.

The initial idea for Frames: Focus came about, as all my pieces do, from an immediate reaction to a musical or extramusical stimulus. Frames: Focus is, however, a reaction to a confluence of events rather than a single event. All of the events center around a growing awareness and appreciation of the work of Milton Babbitt. The events involved the almost simultaneous "discovery" of two music compositions, Philomel by Babbitt and Speculum Speculi by the Babbitt influenced composer Charles Wuorinen. At about the same time, I found an article by John Peel in which the tone row or "twelve pitch-class ordered set" was stated for Babbitt's Reflections for piano and synthesized sound and his Second String Quartet.<sup>3</sup> This set--C B D A C# Bb E F G Eb Ab Gb<sup>4</sup>--serves as the pitch material for my variations. The final factor influencing this piece came about through a conversation with composer John Melby. In this conversation, Melby stated that Babbitt had perhaps the most catholic tastes of any composer that he had met. This statement provided the impetus for both the substance and structure of the variations.

Frames: Focus is a three-movement, fifteen minute work that consists of five set variations connected by cadenzas for each of the four instruments. Each variation is based on the same pitch material and contributes to, like the Wuorinen Speculum Speculi, a "sectional set of variations [in which] . . . each successive section of the work transforms all of what has gone before."<sup>5</sup> The transformation process in this case takes place through a set of successively limited improvisational structures that eventually culminate in a totally pre-determined compositional structure (Frame V, Holograph). Each of the variation structures or "Frames" takes as its model the work of composers that have dealt with the craft of 12 note writing in ways totally different from Babbitt's. These composer models listed in order of their "appearance" in the composition, are Earle Brown, Charles Ives, Josef Hauer, and Karlheinz Stockhausen. The work then becomes a reflection on the ideas of Babbitt's "catholic tastes" and the variety of craft inherent in the twelve note system.

The five Frames focusing the same pitch material on the concept of a totally predetermined compositional structure serves as both the substance and the formal procedure of Frames: Focus. The total form begins with two movements totaling six minutes in which the performers are given maximum choice in determining the composition of the piece. The next equally long section provides the players with several predetermined structures from which they can invent or realize sound events. The last section, half as long as the first two sections, is predetermined completely by the composer. The structure, then, follows a simple A--- B--- Coda form determined by the initial compositional impetus.

The compositional procedure described in this article is one of many procedures employed in ordering sound into some series of logical relationships. This implies one universal found in the creative process of music composition. That is the fundamental concept of somehow ordering sound through time. Henri Pousseur in his article "The Question of Order in New Music" refers to the importance of this concept of musical craft when he states:

We have surely learned once and for all that our action can never encompass the universe and its fundamental nature; but we also remain convinced that in its best moments our action is capable of receiving the world's message, and that this is accomplished above all through the powers of ordering, clarifying and establishing relationships which are within the domain of form. The latter is not called on to explain the whole of reality once and for all, but to make as vast a space as possible inhabitable for us--the largest of which we are capable.<sup>6</sup>

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AUTHOR'S NOTE: Frames: Focus Variations On a Set of Babbitt's by Marvin Lamb is published by Manuscript Publications, 120 Maple Street, Wrightsville, Pa. 17368.

<sup>1</sup>Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone, eds., Perspectives on American Composers (New York, 1971), p. viii.

<sup>2</sup>Webster's New World Dictionary of the American Language (New York, 1953).

<sup>3</sup>John Peel, "Milton Babbitt's Reflections," Contemporary Music Newsletter Vol. IX, No. 213 (1975), p. 1.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.* <sup>5</sup>Charles Wuorinen, Liner Notes, Donald Martino, Notturmo Charles Wuorinen Speculum Speculi (Nonesuch Records, #H-71300).

<sup>6</sup>Benjamin Boretz and Edward T. Cone, eds., Perspectives on Contemporary Music Theory (New York, 1972), p. 115.



HEIDI S. YOCKEY : COMING TO MEET: SELF-EXPRESSION THROUGH  
ACTIVE IMAGINATION

Bruno Bettelheim in his book The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairytales states that the struggle for self-validation depends on our ability to discover and develop inner resources so that our emotional, intellectual, physical and creative potentials "enrich and mutually support one another." We need to become receptive to both our aspirations and our anxieties, fully recognizing difficult situations while at the same time finding imaginative solutions to them.

It is significant to me that this advice comes from a book about children and their relationship to fairytales, for we encourage our children to make rich use of their imaginations, both verbally and non-verbally, while as adults we do not support this resource in ourselves. Unless we are "artists" or "poets" or "writers," we do not allow ourselves to perform the same imaginative activities we encourage in every child, regardless of skill. Instead of being drawers or painters, for example, as adults we are stuck with being mere doodlers, nervous and furtive in our childish compulsion to scribble. It is possible, however, that the ability to express ourselves in visual, non-verbal forms is a shared human instinct for creativity that we do not outgrow when we throw away our crayons, modelling clay, colored paper and paste.

Rhoda Kellogg, author of Analyzing Children's Art, laments the way art is taught at the elementary school level, for such teaching singles out for praise only those few children who show ability for "realistic," representational art work, while the others are told their work is not correct, thus not worth continuing. The result of this kind of channelling is that only "artistic" children are allowed or encouraged to develop their skills in producing visual imagination products. Gradually, through disuse and negative response, most children become adults who are alienated from any expression of visual creativity.

Art therapists try to teach their patients to recover this lost potential, not so that they will have an entertaining hobby, or in the hope that some of them might find their true vocations, but because art psychotherapy is based on the theory that imagination involves both the conscious and the unconscious in its expression. Visual imagination products are thus useful indicators of psychic processes, and may be interpreted diagnostically, symbolically, or therapeutically.

Jungian psychotherapists employ art media in clinical practice according to a technique C. G. Jung called "active imagination." The process of active imagination involves a dialogue between the known, conscious parts of the self, the ego; and the unknown, unconscious aspect of the self which surfaces in the images produced in dreams or other fantasy material. Jung discovered that he could, with practice, bring into form the most elusive, inexpressible aspects of his psychic situation. He then taught his followers, therapists and patients alike, to look for solutions to their problems in specifically non-critical sources rather than by the application of critical reason. By "living with" the images produced in dreams, fantasies and art work, it is hoped that the subject will assimilate the meaning or intent of the images in a manner which does not destroy their integrity. This oblique approach is called "constructive amplification."

James Olney, in Metaphors of Self, writes: "It may be that the nearest one can come to definition is to look not straight to the self, which is invisible



anyway, but sidewise to an experience of the self and try to discover or create some similitude for the experience that can reflect or evoke it and that may appeal to another individual's experience of the self."<sup>1</sup> When a patient produces a series of active imagination drawings or paintings, he may find himself in possession of a unique visual autobiography: a record of his "vital impulse to create order" as Olney says. Like the autobiographical writer, the drawer or painter who tries to put into visual form the events of his inner life, insignificant though they may seem at the moment, may find that he "creates . . . by the very act of seeking, that order that he would have."<sup>2</sup> This creative ordering process is a potential shared by all persons, rather than something which is available only to the gifted and talented few. James Hillman, a Jungian analyst, warns that we "must not confuse the creative with the artistic [as Jung himself frequently did]." Hillman goes on to cite numerous other passages in Jung's work "which state or imply that the development of personality, individuation, or self-realization is the creative human task."<sup>3</sup>

Active imagination drawings and paintings are capable of expressing and reproducing the content of an affect, the psychic situation of the moment, while at the same time the procedure "creates a new situation,"<sup>4</sup> by bringing the affect nearer to consciousness as it becomes more significant. In this sense, active imagination can take the place of dreams with one important advantage: it is an activity that is supported by consciousness. Induced rather than spontaneous, it is an activity which enables the participant to cooperate with what is unknown and frequently experienced as threatening to him. Passive imagination is different from active fantasizing in that the former is automatic; it seems to break through our resistances, and seems to stand for all that to which we are consciously opposed. Active imagination, however, because it stresses the active participation of consciousness, does not alienate it, thus is a self-validating encounter. "Here," Jung states, "in a converging stream flow the conscious and unconscious personality of the subject into a common and reconciling product. A fantasy thus framed may be the supreme expression of the unity of the individual, and it may momentarily create the individual by the consummate expression of its unity."<sup>5</sup>

The active imagination procedure is begun by choosing a dream or some other fantasy image, or it can start with a choice of the media of expression, into which the unconscious content will be projected. Jung advises that the best attitude to have toward the material is one of careful looking: "You then fix this image in the mind by concentrating your attention. Usually it will alter, as the mere fact of contemplating it animates it. The alterations must be carefully noted down all the time," Jung cautions, "for they reflect the psychic processes in the unconscious background which appear in the form of images consisting of conscious memory material. In this way, conscious and unconscious are united, just as a waterfall connects above and below. A chain of fantasy images develops and gradually takes on a dramatic character: the passive becomes an action. In other words, you dream with open eyes."<sup>6</sup>

What is interesting to many people who practice active imagination is that the images seem to form a coherent, though not always logical pattern. "Over the whole procedure," Jung comments, "there seems to reign a dim foreknowledge not only of the pattern, but of its meaning. Image and meaning are identical: and as the first takes shape, so the latter becomes clear." The pattern needs no interpreting, for it "portrays its own meaning."<sup>7</sup>

Jungian active imagination exercises are practiced in a variety of forms:

The sand-box technique is used mostly with children, for it is inspired by observations of children's normal fantasy play with toys. A table is equipped with a sand-box top, and there are numerous small figures--Indians, soldiers, farm animals--to move around. There are also things to build with: fences, stones,

sticks, moss, and various objects of interesting and mysterious color and shape. The child, or occasionally an adult, builds a situation with a story, and usually acts out a satisfying imaginary ending. The therapist is not present during the fantasizing, and only appears in order to photograph or sketch the finished situation as it is portrayed in the sand, giving the child the opportunity to tell what has happened if he chooses.

Painting and drawing are the techniques most frequently used, for just about everyone has access to crayons and water colors. The subject usually starts out with a wash if he is painting, or begins to draw what comes into his mind's eye. A specific dream or fantasy image can also be a starting point. One image tends to produce the next, or something in the composition begins to form of its own, in much the same manner as occurs when Rorschach ink blots are studied. The difference between active imagination products and other projective techniques is that the subject has more choices available from the initiation of the activity to the interpretation of its meaning. It is an expressive as well as a diagnostic technique, which allows the subject to create as well as to perceive order and significance in visual form.

It is difficult to learn to paint and draw without being critical of what you are doing, thus aesthetic standards are a hindrance and not a help in this kind of expression. By critical, I mean the voice which says, this is "good" or "bad," which evaluates and judges according to external, non-personal criteria. Just as creativity should not be confused with artistic ability, active imagination drawings and paintings should not be regarded as art. While both activities are performed carefully and attentively, the active imaginer strives to satisfy only his own inner need. The choices he makes regarding the way he brings content into form may be positional: placement on the page, choice of color, media, and what is portrayed; yet active imagination products often have no recognizable content at all, and serve instead as a vehicle for the content, which may be a mood or an event. Many drawings look more like road maps than "art," yet they may bring a deep sense of accomplishment and satisfaction to their maker.

The visualizer's ability to signify--both to invest an image with meaning and to perceive meaning which is already present in the image when he attends it--is crucial to understanding the personal content of an active imagination product. What and how the participant draws will be comprehended most completely only if it is not interpreted according to a set of symbols whose meaning is fixed and absolute. This is the danger in following a Jungian, Freudian, or any other pre-conceived system of interpretation of imagination products. I believe it is best to let the drawer or the painter say what his work means, for whatever its significance, it belongs primarily to him. My use of the term "active imagination" has thus deviated somewhat from Jung's. I use it now to describe any process by which the imagination is actively engaged in giving form to the seemingly inexpressible. It is a technique for cooperative encountering between the known and the unknown, the explicit and the implicit. It is a creative way of coming to meet those aspects of yourself that you do not know; a visual ordering process which enables you to tell your own story without making yourself and your work into an "it," an object. That is, active imagination is a way of approaching yourself without reducing your life to an explicit, determined thing without mystery. "The best way of discovering yourself and your world," Jung says, "is the creative way. Create a fantasy. Work it out with all the means at your disposal. Work it out as though you were in it, as if you were it, as you would work out a real situation in life which you cannot escape. All the difficulties you overcome in such a fantasy are symbolic expressions of psychological difficulties in yourself, and in as much as you overcome them in your imagination, you also overcome them in your psyche."<sup>8</sup>

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The following are the directions to the active imagination exercise which took place during the second half of the Colloquium lecture:

The exercise is called "The Road of Life." Each participant is asked to take a crayon and mark the spot on the paper in front of him which represents his birth. Without lifting the crayon from the paper, each is then asked to draw the significant events of his life. After a suitable amount of time, the participants are asked to remain in small groups if they wish to discuss the experience and its results.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>James Olney, Metaphors of Self: the Meaning of Autobiography (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1972), p. 29.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>3</sup>James Hillman, The Myth of Analysis (Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern U. Press, 1972), p. 34.

<sup>4</sup>C. G. Jung, Collected Works (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1969), Vol. 8, p. 82.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid.

<sup>8</sup>C. G. Jung, Collected Letters (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton U. Press, 1975) p. 109.

<sup>9</sup>John E. Jones and William Pfeiffer, A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training (Iowa City, Iowa: U. Associated Press, 1976), p. 94.

My house is sick  
                    in the corners and cracks  
but I've left it for the day.

Forty years I've lived in the same dust,  
            the same mirror  
                    I looked in so long this morning

I saw what was wrong:

                    My sleep,  
she'd cut my hair short  
                    during my sleep,  
            lowered my ears.

We creatures are so blind and deaf  
            inside our lives.

Blood is the first food, then milk,  
                                    then teeth,

I'm eating her teeth now  
                    like popcorn  
                                    this old Indian woman.

Mama, I'm chewing  
            your hair off.

                    There's no hurry,  
no way to measure night and day,      here where there's  
                                    no difference  
            between skin and entrail.

                    You are me and I am you,  
and bread and steak and every kind of squash and rice  
            and gourds full of liquid.

                    The sequence is blood, remember,  
then milk,  
            then teeth, the thirty-two details  
                                    in every flick of light.

                    I'm eating teeth now,  
                                    and hair.



I never have been able to tell a story,  
let me tell one step,  
one creak in the board.  
Dark, no flashlight,  
looking for help,  
come to a cabin  
at the edge of the first field  
up from the water,  
no light but a radio's on,  
country music.  
I stand listening for some change  
in volume or station, nothing,  
walk on finally, to the second house,  
he gives me a ride in to town,  
then hurries back and steals  
my aluminum skiff,  
he says no, there's nobody in that other house,  
and yeah the radio's been on for months.  
Floating in the lake  
looks like a forked branch  
with leaves piled on it,  
I swim out,  
it's a woman in a coat,  
still breathing and very strong.  
We keep talking and talking,  
as though we ever get to an end.

How did I get here?

This is not mine.

I need one person  
who can tell me, one sign  
is plenty.

Like a parakeet caught  
in a cigarette package,  
or a griffin with his foot stuck  
in a drain.

Don't come wandering over here.

I can make my own decision.

Sit down and be quiet.

You're drunk and I'm not.

One of us, one of us  
will fall from the roof,  
and be taken away.

As men explore  
their thirst  
suddenly.

You've read about this,  
but never understood.

Now you become  
a story.

You lay your head on a stone edge  
and vanish,  
grain into smooth flour.

In love with such hair,  
the comb turns  
upsidedown.

Good night.

Where is he? you ask  
in your sleep.

Where is she I say  
and we begin  
to move steadily  
against the current.

Good night.

Let's give up  
on staying up.

The right hand  
curls into the left.  
Good night.

The top sheet  
is torn a little.

You hold one side,  
we tear it slowly  
to the edge.

Good night.

As I approached the awesome task of speaking before you today I searched for a topic that would be of universal interest to the audience, of immediate concern to the graduating class, which would not exclude the parents, faculty and Administration in whose care the upbringing and education of those graduating today has been entrusted; and not least a topic on which I might have some personal experience, some qualifying credential so that I would not be talking quite out of my depth.

The topic I have selected is one which I trust you will agree at the end of twenty minutes meets these tests. I want to speak of the New Women and New Men of this generation. We are all of one gender or the other. We all encounter by birth, upbringing, socialization, education and relationships, persons of the other gender. Most of us spend the best of our lives loving, struggling with, parenting with, and occasionally leaving a person of the other gender. So why bring up so obvious, so given, so accepted a fact? The reason I do so today is that something has changed while most of us were not looking: the definitions of gender roles are changing; the opportunities for change are around us, and in my observation, more and more women and men are aware of these possibilities, more are taking advantage of them, and the effects of all this will be felt for a long time to come.

Why name women first in such a statement? The reason must be quite obvious to some of you. Others of you who have for 40 years assumed the fixity of the stars, the recurring cycles of day and night, life and death, and in the words of Elizabeth Janeway, "Man's world and woman's place" have been shocked lately. Not just a rare sport, a gender mutant is insisting on learning a man's skill, physics, engineering, medicine, the law, but a veritable swarm is developing. Out of 23 majors in economics at one undergraduate college I visited recently, 13 were women. The research laboratory at Cornell boasts 8 women where Betsy Anker Johnson, now Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Science and Development, couldn't find a ladies room in the building 20 years ago. At Guilford I have learned there are 14 female math majors, 3 in physics, 39 in biology, 7 in geology and 8 in chemistry.

In 1970, women comprised 38% of the total employed labor force, but they accounted for only 17% of all managers and in that classification occupied the lowest paid positions. But good news is ahead: the rate of growth is nothing short of phenomenal. Between 1960 and 1970 women in management positions grew by 25% in apparel, 70% in lumber, 19% in petroleum and by 60% in my own area of transportation, communications and utilities. Within four years the percentage of women in graduate schools of management grew from less than 10% to 20 to 30% of their student bodies.

Suits by women against overt discrimination in business firms are numbered in the thousands, with--you guessed it--the "gentler sex" winning all but a very few. Which gets me to one of the points I wish to make today. Namely, women have escaped from the situation in which they were to be found and it in my surmise never will be the same again. Ah, but you say, really, don't most of them marry, create a home, bear children, and never work full time? Of course, you are right--today. But look at the figures. At the turn of the century, less than one-fifth of the labor force that was paid was composed of women. I emphasize that word "paid" because in our superior wisdom as economists--male economists, that is--we saw fit to exclude household work from our GNP definitions unless money was exchanged. The labor force participation rate for women shot up to 37% in 1970 and 40% in 1975. Sometime after 1980, it's likely that more than half the labor force will be women.

But what of the other half, us males? Haven't we made some changes too? So we have. You may have noticed the bass and baritone voices of telephone operators lately; the phenomenon of fathers calling in to say they will be late to work because the baby sitter hasn't come is no longer an unusual event for supervisors. The husband who quits to follow his wife to a better job is a risk to be incurred in hiring men, not merely the obverse. And, lo and behold, some men are just dropping out of the labor force at 30 or 40, to raise their children, to manage a household.

Have we gone soft? Have women taken to wearing the pants? What disturbing revolution has taken place?

Kenneth Keniston, the psychologist whose book on adolescents captured the popular imagination of the 60's wrote in 1971:

The issue of women--their development, their potential, and their liberation--is today discussed with a passionate vehemence that has not been equaled since the days of the Suffragette Movement. For it has become clear that the real emancipation promised by the extension to women of the vote is today far from complete. As a result, the topic of women's development, in particular the way their development is systematically subverted and blocked by external factors, has been discussed by countless writers in the last few years. The appearance of the Women's Liberation Movement is both a symptom and a catalyst of this renewed interest in the development of women.

After discussing, at a length which I cannot equal here, the characteristics of the twenty or so women graduate students at Yale in terms of changes in their objective world, their struggle for individuation, their view of their bodies and the process of women's liberation, he concludes with what I see as a truly seminal thought:

...if we are to have new women,...then they will require new men. If women move toward high levels of development, from which they have in the past been blocked, then men will have to change so as to be able to love such women without threat and without fear. One observer has commented that it is ironic that precisely when women are demanding the right to be competent, active and mastering, men are turning away from these traditional masculine qualities toward a greater acceptance of their tenderness, dependency and passivity. I myself view this change in male sex definition not as ironic but as necessary.

These thoughts, as you have detected, formed the genesis of this talk. I want to share with you some observations on these new persons, and the relationships that ensue when two fairly liberated people attempt to work out a joint destiny, dual careers and as often as not become parents.

First, let's deal with how new women and new men find each other. As that old saw about porcupines has it, "with difficulty"! Keniston says:

...it seems at best amusing or at worst neurotic for an attractive young woman of 23 who lives in a college town along with 8,000 unmarried young men to complain, 'There are simply no men around here.' Such a remark obviously has many levels and meanings. But in an important way, this comment was true for the woman who made it: there were indeed very few men who could understand her aspirations, tolerate her independence and her achievements, and offer the kind of parity, reciprocity and mutuality which this woman insisted upon...

These words are critical in the choice of a companion. We men have been the beneficiaries in our patriarchal society of a remarkable support system known as a wife. John Milton's characterization in Paradise Lost still fits the majority of men I know, especially those in business: "He for God only, she for God in him." That is not "parity," "reciprocity," or "mutuality." Indeed, this imbalance may



account for a good deal of the divorce we see around us as women hit 30 and 40 and realize how much they have missed, or men seek to regain the advantage by leaving a woman who has tasted the apple of knowledge for one who still has an Eden-like innocence. Changing the ground rules, however, after ten or twenty years of marriage based on traditional roles to more balanced ones is a sure recipe for conflict if not dissolution. Regretfully, conflict seems inherent in those who persist in avoiding from the start these more balanced roles.

By contrast, let me describe a couple I know who may serve as a prototype of the new women and new men I am talking about. Shirley (not her real name) grew up in the mid-west, the daughter of an engineer and a school teacher. In college she majored as a pre-med in biology but also met her husband-to-be Bob, a chemistry major. Initially, they went to different graduate schools since he wished to take a joint Ph.D./M.D. degree and she to stay in clinical medicine. Their first joint appointment found them with Shirley as a resident, supervising and giving orders to Bob, the intern. Subsequently they moved to another city, she practicing a clinical specialty, he doing research in the same specialty. Now in their mid-thirties, she is head of the department in a large university teaching hospital, he is a respected and productive researcher at a prominent medical school nearby. She earns at least \$10,000 more than he does. They decided to have one child five years ago, another is three. Bob is supportive, warm, playful, a highly creative bench scientist and a wide reader. He also shoots a mean basket. She's a loving person, concerned with individuals, competitive, persistent, tough but also vulnerable, a superb physician. Their children are healthy, secure and, I might add, taken care of during the day by a couple who live in an apartment adjoining their house.

What conclusions are we to draw from this biography I have just told you?

For one, they established early in their lives that both would have working careers, that both would share in the "wife" role. Furthermore, they grasped the fact that their pursuit of equality in the long run would require some sacrifices in the short run--separation in graduate school, inequality of status as resident and intern, the shouldering of chores on the basis of who had the less demanding schedule at work. They delayed having children until their thirties, a common practice among the working professionals I know.

These comments bring me back to Keniston's observations:

If the highest levels of human development involve . . . the growing capacity to integrate and accept one's feelings, then traditional masculine stereotypes have clearly required a repudiation of men's real feelings of tenderness, passivity, dependency and nurturance. As women come to accept and incorporate what was previously and falsely labeled masculine in themselves, men will have to learn to accept what was previously and falsely labeled feminine in themselves. And if men and women can both begin to do this, then we will move closer to a world in which . . . we are all more simply human than anything else.

These words are as important a guide as any I want to leave with you today. As an example, I do not have the fear of having qualities in me labeled as feminine--in fact, I can remember laughing when some of my buddies in the Navy thought I was "fem" because I liked art galleries and symphonic music; I sense that the women in this group no longer worry about themselves if they feel competitive or logical or are interested in mechanics or body contact sports.

The issue, I believe is a broader one, well described by Carl Gustav Jung, the Swiss psychologist. Human beings, he said, are composites of both masculine and feminine characteristics. We are one or the other genetically and our upbringing strengthens that orientation. But we also have the other qualities latent in us, the unrealized part of us, the part that is attracted to the opposite sex precisely

because it is part of us.

Ironically, it is also the part of us that we can get most frightened by-- women by the image of the male intruder in their dreams, men by the dream image of the destructive female.

There is that opposite right inside of us. My wife Janice teaches Tai Chi Chuan, a body movement course that some of you have also taken on this campus. The banner that she hangs in the gym, or wherever the class meets, has the symbol of Yin-Yang, feminine and masculine intertwined as exact opposites in form and as light and dark. That is the union of opposites that some of you studied in the poetry of William Butler Yeats, others of you in Eastern religion, and others yet in your exposure to Jung in the "Being Human in the Twentieth Century" course.

That is what I am speaking of today: a consciousness that the riches of the human soul are both masculine and feminine; that they be given a recognition of their value in each of us, whether we are male or female. Carolyn Heilbrun who teaches English literature at Columbia calls it a recognition of Androgyny. "This ancient Greek word," she says, "from andro (male) and gyne (female) defines a condition under which the characteristics of the sexes, and the human impulses expressed by men and women, are not rigidly assigned. Androgyny seeks to liberate the individual from the confines of the appropriate." "Androgyny suggests a spirit of reconciliation between the sexes; it suggests, further, a full range of experience open to individuals who may as women be aggressive, as men, tender. It suggests a spectrum upon which human beings choose their places without regard to propriety or custom."

I am not advocating that women work for money, or men stay home, but that these are among the choices available. And as such, choices which then necessitate, as they did with Shirley and Bob, compromises or even temporary sacrifices, especially of ego.

Traditionally women have sacrificed their ego function for that of their men. Formal German academic parlance even assigns the wife the status of her husband: Frau Doktor Professor. Today in America men will be asked to find self-actualization in washing diapers, hunting for a new apartment, even in just listening to their spouses exorcize the devils of the workday after they come home. We shall grow as human beings as we come to grips with the conflict in ourselves, the conflict of assertiveness and aggressiveness with the desire to be nurtured and loved; the conflict between helping others to achieve and gain recognition and to achieve and gain recognition directly, ourselves.

If we are to believe Donald MacKinnon of the University of California/Berkley:

...creative males give more expression to the feminine side of their nature than do less creative men. Their elevated scores on femininity indicate an openness to their feelings and emotions, a sensitive intellect and understanding self awareness and wide-ranging interests. ...In the language of C. G. Jung creative persons are not so completely identified with their masculine roles as to blind themselves to or deny expression to the more feminine traits.

Or we can take Rainer Maria Rilke's advice to a young poet:  
The great renewal of the world will perhaps consist in this, that man and maid, freed from all false feeling and aversion will seek each other not as opposites, but as brother and sister ... and still come together as human beings.

Nor will this process stop with your recognition of this fact of androgyny in yourself or in others. Institutions also change in response to inner changes. Our concern with propriety of behavior, of relationships between persons,

of the tastes and wishes of individuals, will change in response to greater recognition of our androgynous nature. We shall see, I predict, language that is less sexist; where beautiful can become a manly adjective and handsome a female one. We shall see many different forms of marriage evolving, different forms of life styles prior to marriage, and different terms of employment, such as one job for two persons, or flexible hours based on individual preferences. We shall see more of women in positions of political and economic power, such as senators, Presidents and chairpersons of boards of directors. In fact, if not in law, many of these events have already taken place. Nor will you be alone in witnessing these changes outside academic walls; we shall equally be affected by them inside.

Commencement talks are forever concluding on a bright note about that great world outside that awaits you. I want to leave with you the thought that much of your bright future lies in the "inscape" as Gerard Manley Hopkins called it, that chiaroscuro of light and darkness that is the human mind. These differences, whatever you call them, Logos and Eros, light and dark, masculine and feminine, are primordial in human beings and therefore far more important and precious than we have been willing to recognize in Western culture. The more at home you get to be with both these sides in yourself and in others, the more your lives will be full ones, the richer your gifts will be to those to whom you are closest. The more you will be in touch with what is, in fact, the Ultimate in our world.

My wife tells me that she used to say a certain prayer as a child that started "Our Father-Mother-God, all-harmonious." That is not a bad reminder of the God within, the quality some of us have called the Inner Light that dwells within each of us. Attention to that, seeking that primordial unity will bring you a lot closer to the human being you really are.

Thank you.

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In a recent Harper's Magazine a fellow named Barry Lopez constructed a new proposal about the relationship of wolves to their prey. He indicated that a very complex dialogue or ritual was involved that has not been allowed for in our almost Newtonian animal behavior theories. He also notes man's fear of allowing animals complex intricacies that we assume in ourselves. Lopez concludes that "It is not man but the universe that is subtle."

I am very much involved in the exploring of good poetry. But, being a well raised, unavoidably utilitarian, American, I have a nagging need to justify, at least for myself, this art form that is considered by most to be a frivolity allowed by an affluent society. Lopez' concluding statement is the reason for poetry, perhaps also for other arts, but most especially for poetry. The poem is the human attempt to say the nature and experience of the universe on its terms, subtle ones, for those are the most accurate. It is this subtlety of nature, and that nature in man, that the poem is always about, always trying to indicate with a tenuous precision that points no blatant finger and sheds no therapeutic blood. This single characteristic of nature and the thin threads of a fine poem make the question "What does it mean?" gross. "What does the universe mean?" is as good a question. This is not a plea for obscurity or vagueness, only for delicacy and discipline.

Lopez, in the course of his article, refers to a Robinson Jeffers poem to make a point. Somehow the short Jeffers lines manage to encompass and enliven the subtle evolutionary possibilities of animal interaction far better than an extensive behaviorist proposition and conclusion: "What but the wolf's tooth whittled so fine/ the fleet limbs of the antelope."

Once, when nearing the end of a rewrite of a poem, an urgent warning came to me. There was a moth fluttering around in the poem, which gives context to the directive: "Stop. Don't touch the fragile deathless wings." The line was eventually written out of the poem, which is probably fortunate, but it was a passionate edict from some sensibility of ear and mind to heed and recognize the delicate subtle thing that the moth, and indeed the poem, had become. The line also contains the recognition that the moth and the poem can be blundered over by many and still be available to a keen mind.

Fine distinctions of word choice, discriminating rhythms, images and metaphors are as important to the poem as its subject. The vehicle is not separable from its occupant. The extent to which these elements are true to the subtlety of the universal thing the poem is concerned with, is the extent to which the poem is good. If it were otherwise we could write down the illusive "meaning" that is so often asked for, and burn the poem. The same gesture could be made toward the universe, as indeed it is in some dogmatic religious sects.

Another naturalist gave insight into the need of deft writing. In The Immense Journey Loren Eiseley finds a spider that has cast its web over a street lamp after it is time for spiders to be gone with the first frosts. In his usual apprehension about man's future, Eiseley sees a comparison between man and the spider's futile stand against winter. He observes, though, that his mind has received "a kind of courage by looking at a spider in a street lamp."

Here was something that ought to be passed on to those who will fight our final freezing battle with the void. I thought of setting it down carefully as a message to the future: "In the days of the frost seek a minor sun."



But as I hesitated, it became plain that something was wrong. The marvel was escaping--a sense of bigness beyond man's power to grasp, the essence of life in its great dealings with the universe. It was better, I decided, for the emissaries returning from the wilderness . . . to record their marvel, not to define its meaning. In that way it would go echoing on through the minds of men, each grasping at that beyond out of which, the miracles emerge, and which, once defined, ceases to satisfy the human need for symbols.

Poetry and metaphor are the ways in which nature demands that we speak of it, lest we lose "a sense of bigness" and "the essence of life in its great dealings with the universe." Not only does the writer make his experience available to another, but he allows both himself and the other person who reads keenly, a sense of commonality of vision and discovery in that large, subtle and cold universe. This is the point where there is no vanity in a poet. The Walt Whitman that posed with a cardboard butterfly in his beard was in a very different character from the man who made the naked and impassioned plea for the reader to pursue him and his meanings at the end of "Song of Myself."

Failing to fetch me at first keep encouraged,  
missing me one place search another,  
I stop somewhere waiting for you.

There was a time when the alchemist, poet and scientist were intimately related, if not the same person. I think that one thing, at least, remained common to these fields. The scientist's demand for accuracy and the poet's allegiance to subtlety are of the same rigorous genealogy. Both are a devotion to precise exploration of the universe.

Good poetry is not popular. The reading and grasping of subtleties takes effort. The rewards are the stuff of life: wonder, excitement, depression, and now and then the wondrous warm flash of comprehension. These same qualities are part of scientific exploration. Subtlety is intellectual but not elitist, as democratic as the first amendment but available only to the disciplined and discerning eye.

Yes, Mr. Lopez, it is the universe that is subtle, not man, and least of all his language. But the word "subtle" is of human devising and to some the line between it and blatancy is the difference between the holy and the profane.

P O E T

I am the great white two-horned rhinoceros of Lugubabwe  
    "Formidable" they say of me  
I make forays on my pounding feet out of the drygrass clearing  
    Despite the weak eyes  
A legend in my time

At night when the moon hangs high  
I lie stretched out upon the ground  
The saliva runs out of my mouth  
My tons of greywhite meat convulse, heave  
    In my den  
    My formidable sleeping-place  
Which the moon sees

Longlived but not forever  
I, massif, incongruous  
    In these wastes  
Look to founder shortly into white  
Horns, white bones, heaps  
    Moon-glazed  
    In Lugubabwe.

The idea that the universe is the creation of God is by no means universal. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition the idea that this creation was a calling of a world into being out of nothing seems to have originated as a defense against the dualistic view found in Iranian religion which identified the material world with evil. There are basically two arguments against the traditional view. One is stated by Plato in the Republic (379B). Since God is good he cannot be the cause of evil and therefore not the cause of the world in which "few are the goods of human life and many the evils." The other argument is directed against the contention that God must be the creator of the universe, for we cannot otherwise understand how it came into existence. The trouble with this is that it really does not contribute any real understanding. Apart from the fact that it ignores the equally obvious question, "Where does God come from?" it really tells us nothing. Paley's famous argument that if we found a watch in the forest we would, of course, infer a watch-maker is quite irrelevant. We are familiar with watches and know in a general way at least how they come into existence out of prior materials. We have no knowledge of where universes come from and the assumption that the process is like watchmaking on a grand scale is completely gratuitous. Explanations always take something for granted, in terms of which the explanation is made. If we have something which needs to be explained it does not really help to postulate the prior existence of something which is somehow alleged without explanation to provide the explanation. It does not cast any great light on the problem simply to assert that there is a being who can call universes into existence by saying "Let there be . . . and there was."

The sensible thing to do, since we have to start somewhere, is to take the universe as we find it and ask what it is like. Perhaps then we can gain some useful knowledge. This is the approach of Alfred North Whitehead whose position I shall attempt to explain. It will appear that both God and creativity play a real and continuing role in the ongoing world.

Let us take a look at the world in which we find ourselves. What can we say about it? One thing that strikes us immediately is that it consists of various things in endless variety. Other beings basically like ourselves, animals, plants, microscopic creatures--all exhibiting what we call life; other things lacking that strange characteristic, with all sorts of properties; things large and small, near and far, pleasant and unpleasant, useful and dangerous. This only begins the story.

Yet for all its variety the universe that we experience is somehow a unity. It exists in a single matrix of space-time which, on the one hand, holds things together and, on the other, supports their separateness and differentiation. Between the several elements there exists an extensive and complicated set of interrelations and interconnections which we try to express in laws of nature.

The universe is both one and many--and one and many seem to be correlatives. We have no ground for saying that the world is really a lot of separate things which somehow looks like a unity, nor can we say that it is essentially an undifferentiated unity which somehow supports the illusion of differentiation.

When we look at this world in which we find ourselves, we see no static world but a world of constant change, some of which seems to have a unity and direction, so that it is natural to speak of evolution and of purpose. Be that as it may, the immediacy and unity of one's experience at a given moment passes, giving

way to a new unity with its immediacy. One thing we are sure of, unless we have been corrupted, is that this flow of experience exhibits a basic spontaneity centered in ourselves. We find ourselves faced with a world which though constantly in process presents us with a fait accompli of which we must take account. We are also faced at each moment with a future which offers a wide variety of possibilities, and experience is the process of reacting to the given and the immediately possible in such a way that a new unity emerges. "The many become one and are increased by one," Whitehead says. There is now a new situation with a new element in it, which demands a new unification. Experience is a succession of such unifications, "occasions of experience," Whitehead calls them, or, borrowing a phrase from William James, "drops of experience." These "actual occasions" are the "actual entities" of which the world is composed.

Each occasion of experiencing has two poles, or two primary aspects. On the one hand it is receptive of the given world. On the other hand it involves a reaction to what is given, a reaction evaluating the role the datum is to play in the completed experiencing. This reactive or responsive side of the occasion of experience is the germ of mentality.

The final unity of each drop of experiencing is the unity of what is given and what is possible and it is reached by a process of "growing together." It develops by a self-directed process of evaluation, selection and supplementation by which a new actualization is reached in which what is given and what is possible are fused together into the immediacy of a new unity of feeling. When that is reached a new drop of experience has formed. The whole process of development is guided from within. This is the locus of creativity.

We might call these occasions of experience, or better, occasions of experiencing, the atoms out of which the world is made, but if we choose to talk this way we must be careful to remember two essential points: we are not talking about some kind of atoms which have experiences of some kind or other, nor are we talking about enduring somethings to which the experiences somehow belong. The actual entities are the acts of experiencing, coming into being and perishing, each inheriting from its predecessor past experiences and future hopes. The enduring objects of our familiar world are not assemblages of material atoms but networks of varying degrees of complexity, extended in both space and time, composed of occasions of experiencing. Quarks, sub-atomic particles, electrons, protons, neutrons, atoms, molecules, and compounds as well as living structures are such networks of actual occasions, or occasions of experiencing.

At this point you may be thinking: "I don't get what he's trying to say. Surely it is nonsense to think that electrons, for example, experience anything." Well, yes and no. No, in the sense of conscious experience such as we enjoy. Yes, in the sense that each occasion of experience in the chain of experiences that we call an electron is a continued coming to terms with the world in which it finds itself. The difficulty is in our identification of experience with consciousness. But if we stop to reflect we know that consciousness is only one aspect of experience, very important for many purposes but ultimately secondary. We know the importance of unconscious drives, of the unconscious element in learning, as well as its role in pathological conditions. It is interesting to note that even scientists often find it easy to speak of scientific processes in experiential terms. Otto Struve, a leading 20th century astrophysicist, discussing "The Radio Galaxy"<sup>1</sup> can say, "The electron has plenty of time to make up its mind (or whatever it is that makes the electron decide to jump) to return to its ground orbit." Otto Frisch, one of the pioneers in understanding nuclear fission, says: "If you like phrases with a mystical flavor you may say that the quantum theory has revealed the spark of life that glows even in atoms and molecules."<sup>2</sup> Of course, these men are using figurative language--



they have no notion that electrons or atoms are conscious. What these statements do point to is that there is some sort of response to the environment and some suggestion of spontaneity--or creativity at a low level--and that is all Whitehead needs.

This point of the secondary role of consciousness in creative experience may be approached from another direction and at a much higher level in terms of a statement of Betty Adcock's in discussing the poet's inspiration. "You must," she said, "confront experience before consciousness gets ahold of it." The phrase itself is an example of something which I think is very true, but which is very hard to bring into the clear focus of consciousness.

The prominent element in consciousness is, of course, sense perception. Whitehead, however, insists that sense data are not primitive data, the material out of which experience is evolved. On the contrary, sense experience is rooted in experience "before consciousness gets ahold of it." Sense perception originates in the fact that the animal body is so constructed that when functioning normally, emphasis is laid on the areas in the contemporary world that are particularly important for the continued existence of the enduring object of which the present occasion is a component. In practical terms this means that if you want to get across Friendly Avenue down at the College gate and stay alive, your sight and your hearing better be in good working order.

Within the limits of this paper it is quite impossible to do justice to Whitehead's complex theory of perception. It is necessary, however, to mention one more point, though it can only be suggested. Sense data, he holds, are the immediate bearers of emotional tone--they do not serve merely as triggers to set it off. He puts it: "The affective tone of perception of a green woodland in spring can only be defined by the delicate shades of the green. It is a strong aesthetic emotion with the qualification of green in springtime. . . . We enjoy the green greenly: we enjoy the sunset with an emotional pattern including among its elements the colors and contrasts of the vision. It is this that makes Art possible: It is this that procures the glory of perceived nature" (AI 246, 25-251).

I have said that the objects of our familiar world are chains and networks of the fundamental units, the occasions of experiencing. This basic description also applies to human beings. A human being is an extremely complicated example of such a network, all the constituents of which are in constant and essential interaction.

What we call the body is a set of organized processes which support one another, including that particular chain of occasion of experiences, each inheriting from its predecessor, which make up the "I" which each of us experiences as our "self." As far as our experience goes, the creativity expressed in the world process seems to reach a climax in such beings.

If we ask what the goal of the production of these occasions of experiencing is, it is, briefly, the achievement of value. Value, Whitehead says, is the intrinsic reality of an occasion of experiencing. "The element of value, of being valuable, of being an end in itself, of being something which is for its own sake, must not be omitted in any account of . . . the most concrete actual something" (SMW 93). In general the process of creating value is directed toward production of maximum intensity, but intensity has dimensions of depth and width, and the maximum aimed at is an over-all maximum, not an immediate maximum which might prove to be destructive of intensity in the end.

It is time now to ask what role Whitehead assigns to God in this creative process which is the essence of the ultimately real things. God, he maintains, is himself one of these actualities. He is unique in certain respects, but essentially he is the same sort of thing. He is bipolar, as the others are, and he is engaged in his own process, instead of being remote perfection, above all change.

God's mental pole, which Whitehead calls his primordial nature, is an envisagement of a graded order among possibilities such that their realization produces a stable world and not a chaos. To suggest the kind of thing this means I shall propose a crude analogy--the envisagement of a set of rules for a game. Note in the first place that these are not analogous to the "laws of nature." They determine what acts are relevant, they establish what is possible, not what must be actual. They determine what acts are valuable, and they establish a goal. Thus in chess the possibility of the move known as castling is irrelevant as an opening move, since the conditions under which it is possible do not exist. To move king's rook's pawn forward one square is a possible opening move but hardly a valuable one. But in any case the rules allow freedom for an endless variety of procedures, and make possible the achievement of value.

The trouble with an analogy like this is that it suggests all sorts of irrelevant considerations. The important point here is simply that the envisagement of a fixed order among otherwise remote possibilities provides a meaning for such things as relevance, value and achievement, at the same time it provides for freedom.

The question then is how God's vision of an order among the possibilities inherent in the universe is effective in the process of the drops of experience which are the ultimate realities. The key here is the interconnection of all actualities. Each occasion of experiencing has to come to grips with all previous occasions, including God. At the beginning of each process, the nascent entity is faced with God's vision of what the situation calls for, though this is not a part of its conscious content--consciousness belongs to the latest phase of certain peculiar organisms like ourselves. But like the chess player, one's reaction to the situation is one's own. God does not force our hands, nor is he annoyed if our choice is poor. God's creativity found its primordial expression in the vision of the order among possibilities. Our creativity is expressed in how we actualize the possibilities that lie before us.

This is at best but a rough sketch of an attempt, unrivaled in scope, to understand the kind of universe we find ourselves in. It would be a challenging project to try to show how it is applicable to the various expressions of human creativity which have been considered in this Colloquium, but this is obviously impracticable. In conclusion, therefore, I shall limit myself to pointing out some of the broad general implications of such a view as Whitehead offers.

In the first place, it presents us with an open universe. Whitehead's idea of process is doubtless rooted in the doctrine of evolution, but he takes this in a very radical sense. There is no event with which it began, and there is no event with which it will end. He explicitly rejects Tennyson's "one far-off divine event toward which the whole creation moves" (PR 169), just as he rejects a far-off divine event from which it stems. Within the limits provided by God's envisagement of an order among possibilities even the laws of nature may evolve. Thus though he would undoubtedly regret many of the trends in the modern world, he would not see in them a perverse deviation from a divinely ordained order.

Again, Whitehead by locating in the simplest organism an inseparable union of datum and response is able to avoid what he considers to be the disastrous dualism between matter and mind which cripples all our efforts. He says: "A scientific realism based on mechanism is conjoined with an unwavering belief in the world of men and of the higher animals as being composed of self-determining organisms. This radical inconsistency at the basis of modern thought accounts for much that is half-hearted and trivial in our civilization" (SMW 76). If one may offer such a violent paraphrase of Bishop Berkeley we might say: "To be is to be self-determined." Creativity is the self-determination of the individual actuality. God's envisagement of order is not a limitation on freedom. It makes meaningful freedom possible.

Another important consequence of the whole line of thought is that it gives a deeper ground for tolerance than the principle of "live and let live." "The duty of tolerance is our finite homage to the abundance of inexhaustible novelty which is awaiting the future; and to the complexity of accomplished fact which exceeds our stretch of insight" (AI 52).

Finally, as this quotation suggests, there is the challenge to creative activity. A friend of Whitehead's tells of a conversation with him: "Suddenly he stood and spoke with passionate intensity, 'Here we are with our finite beings and physical senses in the presence of a universe whose possibilities are infinite, and even though we may not apprehend them, those possibilities are actualities.'" (Dial 134).

On another occasion he expressed himself in this way: "I wish I could convey this sense I have of the infinity of the possibilities that confront humanity--the limitless variations of choice, the possibility of novel and untried combinations, the happy turns of experiment, the endless horizons opening out. As long as we experiment, as long as we keep this possibility of progressiveness, we and our societies are alive; when we lose them, both we and our societies are dead, no matter how externally active we and they may be, no matter how materially prosperous they and we may appear. And nothing is easier to lose than this element of novelty. It is the living principle in thought, which keeps all alive" (Dial 163). This is the challenge of creativity.

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<sup>1</sup>Page and Page, Stars and Clouds of the Milky Way, p. 225.

<sup>2</sup>0. Frisch, Atomic Physics Today, p. 240.



## INTRODUCTION

When asked to give a talk on creativity in the physical sciences, I was flattered: everyone likes to think of himself as creative. Shortly thereafter I was struck by the sudden humbling realization that I was not very creative. As a matter of fact, I never created any part of the physical world, and I probably never will. How could I give a talk on creativity when I was not involved in it?

Maybe I could hide my lack of talent by telling about something really impressive, such as how the universe was created. The only problem with that was that I don't know how the universe was created. What was I to talk about?

Creation implies some sort of beginning. If something has a beginning, then it ought to be possible to find out when it began. Now this sounds better; being able to tell time is something everyone understands how to do. On top of that there is a fabulous creation to talk about: the knowledge and technology that have been invented by many generations of scientists that lead us to believe that we know when the universe began. This work (the understanding of when "the creation" began) is an abstract piece of art that resides in the minds of the scientific community, but can be enjoyed by anyone who is willing to spend some time wrestling with the following story.

## BACKGROUND

In the recent history of the earth, man became significantly different from the rest of the animals when he began to think abstractly. An early manifestation of this happening was the invention of a written symbolic language. One person no longer had to do all the thinking by himself. By reading another person's attempt at understanding, one did not try to follow blind alleys that others had already explored. A person did not have to be present to give advice; even the dead could contribute to the ideas and thoughts of the future. By reading what the ancients thought more modern persons could learn how others thought without suffering from the inevitable editorializing that takes place when knowledge is passed on using only the spoken word. The pursuit of knowledge (creativity in science) became a community affair. No longer was one individual required to make the whole creation, the work could be spread out over many generations, allowing larger problems, such as when it all began, to be attacked.

As the community of scholars emerged, a search for an "order in all this" began. It seemed implausible that such a marvelous thing as the universe could be completely chaotic. "Order must be discovered," says J. Bronowski in Science and Human Values, "and, in a deep sense, it must be created." Order in thinking (sometimes called reason) became "the thing." For Aristotle and during the next thousand years, if something were reasonable, that was sufficient reason to believe in it, independent of whether or not it was true.

The male has more teeth than the female in mankind, and sheep, and goats, and swine. . . . Those persons which have the greatest number of teeth are the longest lived.

--Aristotle

Medical books in the 14th Century still used this piece of reason, even though it can easily be shown to be wrong.

There were certain events that seemed periodic--such as the day-night cycle, the arrival of spring, etc. To order these events, time was invented. A



clock is a device that uses some repeating phenomena to count the length of an interval. The first real need for time (a calendar) occurred when men began to live together in somewhat larger communities and had to plant crops to feed the whole group without migrating to new sources of food. The farmers needed to know when to plant their crops. Planting in late fall did not give a good yield. As with all good inventions, it was soon misused in an attempt to gain power for a select group. The priests found it useful to be able to predict eclipses of the sun and moon (a consequence of understanding the calendar) so that it appeared that they controlled the heavens. By clever political use of this knowledge, the astrologers had a base of power that let them control large numbers of people.

But on with the story. The early clocks used the sun as a time keeper. This was not satisfactory, because then time depended upon the seasons. These clocks were useful to tell when one should come home for lunch, but hardly useful when trying to measure the age of the universe. The Egyptians had better clocks, ones that used dripping water to tell time. These did not depend upon the seasons, but were not useful to measure the long time periods needed for precise navigation. Good clocks (called chronometers) were not invented until the 16th century. By this time people understood enough about their invention that it could be used to predict mechanical phenomena with great accuracy.

The use of order to describe and understand the world continued on many fronts. The medieval engineers, usually through trial and error, learned to build large structures, to smelt metals, to dig deep into the ground for ore. The engineers were far ahead of the thinkers. Aristotle claimed that it was not reasonable to be able to sail into the wind, even though some 200 years before he appeared on the earth, some enterprising engineer invented the lanteen sail. Until the 1500's reasonable thinking was divorced from the natural world. Progress came by trial and error, not from deliberate use of the human mind.

In the 16th century a revolution occurred in the way that thinkers (as compared with engineers) decided to look at the physical world. First of all, their ideas about the world had to agree with the way the physical world really was. To back up this desire, a "truth in reporting" act was adopted. Today it is sometimes known as the scientific method. Observations about the universe were made and reported in a manner that was independent of the observer. Ideas that just described the current states of nature were considered inadequate. Because of the increased ability to measure time, the added requirement of predictability was included as a necessary condition for a theory to be considered good.

Perhaps the biggest contribution to the eventual understanding of the universe was the introduction of abstract mathematical models. This addition to the arsenal of weapons used by the thinkers was made popular by Galileo and Newton. The real physical object was replaced by the mathematical concept of a point, and real space by Cartesian co-ordinates. These abstract ideal models made it possible to describe and understand much of the mechanical. These powerful results led some philosophers, LaPlace in particular, to speculate that everything could be determined by the laws of classical mechanics.

About this same time, man's vision of the physical world increased as the narrow tunnel of human vision was widened by the invention of the telescope and microscope. As "the world" became larger, the attempts to impose an order on it became more complicated and more fascinating. Despite all the new technologies and creature comforts that arose out of the advent of science, the dreamers and far-sighted scientists continued to wonder: "When did it all begin?"

## THE MODERN SEARCH FOR A BEGINNING

An early attempt at setting a time for "the beginning" was done by Bishop James Ussher in 1658. Using the Bible as a clock, counting the birth-death cycles as set in The Chronicles, he came up with an answer:  $4004 \pm 1$  BC. The Bishop used what he thought was the most reliable source of data he could find. However, he assumed that man was around in the beginning, making his answer open to criticism. But it is a noteworthy attempt because a "clock" was used to tell when it all began. Ussher had the right idea, even if he used a poor technology to get the answer.

The search for a better clock pierces to the heart of the atom. A finite sized chunk of an element, such as copper, is made up of billions upon billions of identical atoms. If one examines the atom (another invention created in the minds of the scientific community) closely, most of its mass is concentrated into a small nucleus made up of protons and neutrons, about  $10^{-15}$  meters in diameter, having a density of about a billion tons per teaspoon. An interesting consequence of this discovery is that we are made up of a very small volume of nuclear matter and a lot of empty space.

Each element is characterized by a particular number of protons, while its mass is determined by the total number of nucleons (protons and neutrons). Two nuclei with the same number of protons but different numbers of neutrons are called isotopes. The forces that hold the nucleus together cause most of the possible isotopes not to exist. Stable nuclei, those that have been around for billions of years, lie on the band shown in figure 1. When a nucleus is created that is not on the stable band (because it has too many neutrons or too many protons to be stable), it undergoes a spontaneous transformation to try to make itself stable. Nature apparently puts a premium on stability. This interaction is called radioactive decay. The stuff that is ejected during the decay process cannot be seen with your eye. A young man in England in the early 1900's invented a device that could electronically "see" the decay products. With typical humility, he named the device after himself: Geiger counter. As the nature of radioactive decay was investigated more thoroughly with devices like the Geiger tube, a few interesting consistencies surfaced.

If one makes a picture (See figure 2) of the number of decays a sample of radioactive nuclei make in a small interval of time on one axis, the elapsed time on the other axis, a straight line on a semi-logarithmic graph occurs. One characteristic of this straight line is that if you take the number of decays at time  $t_1$  and then measure the time interval needed for the number of decays per time to be halved, a value appears that is independent of the value of  $t_1$ . This constant for a particular graph is called the half-life. A decay with a short half-life results in a very steep graph, while a decay process with a long half-life gives an almost horizontal line. The measured half-lives for various radioactive isotopes were found to depend only upon the isotope, not upon the quantity of the material, the year, or even whether it is in our galaxy. The half-lives of the known isotopes range from less than a millionth of a second to times longer than a billion years.

Radioactive decay, therefore, has all the necessary properties of a very good clock. The half-life can be used just like the pendulum in a grandfather's clock. If one knows how much of the radioactive isotope there is now, then one can predict how much will be left one half-life later--one half the amount. In three half-lives there will be only one eighth remaining.

To make radioactive decay into a simple clock, all one would have to do is find a sample of some isotope with a known half-life, know its mass at time zero and measure its mass now. This, unfortunately, can't be done. It appears impossible to be able to see a sample on the earth, and somehow predict correctly how much of the material was there at the beginning. However, by a happy coincidence, some heavy

elements have more than one isotope that is radioactive and has a long half-life:

Isotope:	Half-Life:
Uranium 235	.7 billion years
Uranium 238	4.5 billion years

From laboratory experiments in nuclear physics and mathematical models of stars, one has a pretty good idea of how the heavy elements (such as lead and uranium) were initially formed. On the surfaces of exploding stars, known as Supernovas, these giant elements are formed in the cauldron of the gods, cooking at many millions of degrees Centigrade. The atoms that make up the earth and most of us were manufactured in Supernovas. From this knowledge, one can estimate the initial relative abundance of various isotopes of an element. When Uranium was formed in the cosmic kettle, it was made with an abundance ratio  $U^{238}/U^{235} = 1.5$ . Today, the abundance ratio measured in non-eroded samples (such as moon rocks and meteorites) is 139. If you examine figure 3, you see the two lines for the decay of the two isotopes of Uranium. Uranium 235 is the steeper line because it has the shorter half-life. The graph is drawn so that the present relative abundance is 139 to 1. If you track back in time until the ratio is 1.5, then you know when the Uranium in the rocks of the sample was formed. The nuclear chronometer puts the age of the solar system at 6.7 billion years, old enough for species to become extinct and turn into fossils.

The same sort of clock can be used to measure the age of living objects. In this case two isotopes of Carbon are used, Carbon 14 and Carbon 12. Carbon 12 is stable, while Carbon 14 has a half-life of 5730 years. All living things are made up of carbon-based compounds. The body does not manufacture the carbon, but gets it from other living things. Due to the cosmic radiation that hits the atmosphere, there is an equilibrium concentration of  $C^{14}/C^{12} = 1.3 \times 10^{-12}$  in all living things as long as they breathe. Once they die, this ratio decreases as the Carbon 14 decays, making a graph just like figure 3. By measuring the present ratio of  $C^{14}/C^{12}$  in the remains of living things found on the earth, the age that homo sapiens has been wandering the earth is set at about 2 million years. The solar system is very much older than man.

## THE PRIMORDIAL "BIG BANG"

Information about the beginning of the universe also comes from atoms, the tiny building blocks of all matter. When an atom is heated, it gives off light. Thomas Edison as well as the cave people used this to convert night into day. When light emitted by excited atoms is analyzed according to color, a particular characteristic pattern for each element is found. Each element has a unique light signature. If one aims a telescope at some star, and analyzes the light collected, the elements that gave off that light can be identified by their light signatures. In this way astronomers have deduced what the stars are made of. As they catalogued the color content of the stars, a German astronomer, Vogel, in 1888 noticed that the spectra of the stars not in our galaxy were all shifted towards the red, that is, the signatures were shifted towards lower frequency light waves. This strange happening is interpreted in the same way as the phenomena that one notices when listening to the whistle (a sound signature) of a fast moving train. As the train approaches, the pitch (the frequency of the sound waves) appears to be higher, and as the train passes and moves away, the pitch drops. The shifted light signatures from the other stars seem to be telling us that all the galaxies are moving away from us!

There are two possible interpretations of this result. Either we are the center of the universe, or the universe is exploding. The scientific evidence seems to be in overwhelming support of the second interpretation. Seeing everything move away from you is a plausible result of being in an exploding system. To see this,



let us use an idealized one dimensional model. Consider yourself as a piece of a rubber band that is being stretched. No matter where you are on the rubber band, all your neighbors will be moving away from you. The universe must have been created by an enormous explosion, and the pieces are still moving away from us. Time Zero is when that explosion occurred.

Using the laws of mechanics developed by Einstein and Newton, one can figure out about when the universe must have exploded, if it is to look the way the telescopes indicate it is now. An answer of  $15 \pm 5$  billion years results, much older than the age of the solar system. If the universe is expanding, then it should also be cooling down. The electric refrigerator in your home uses this physical law to make ice. Recently a group of scientists measured the temperature of outer space, and found it to be 2.7 degrees Kelvin, less than -360 degrees Fahrenheit. The existing laws of thermodynamics, the same ones that are used to design steam engines, can be used with this temperature to figure out how long the universe has been cooling down. This "clock" gives an age of  $12 \pm 4$  billion years. It is indeed nice that these two clocks, so very different in nature, should agree so well with each other.

Will the universe keep expanding forever, or will it recycle? The answer to this question has interesting theological as well as scientific implications. The attraction of one mass for another (gravity), the force which makes me stick to the surface of the earth, is slowing down the rate of expansion. The rate at which the expansion of the universe is slowing down is determined by the mass contained in the universe. The best current estimates of the amount of matter in the universe indicate that it won't recycle, but . . .

## CONCLUSION

Here is a marvelous creation, a work of art that many generations have worked on. It resides in the minds of the scientists: we know when it all started. Using technological inventions to examine the tiny atoms, people have been able to decode when they first appeared on earth, when the earth condensed from cosmic dust, and when the explosion occurred that caused the dust to form. From the tiny pieces comes the information about the massive universe. Man, who has been around for less than 1/1000 of the span of time, has been able to pry loose with his technological tools the secret of the age of nature. I don't believe any scientist believes that this is the final answer; it is just the current state of a marvelously evolving creation.

As astronomers looked through the reaches of space towards the beginning of time, they noticed that space wasn't really empty. On the average there is 1 molecule per cubic inch, most of it being hydrogen, the most primitive element. But they also found traces of some very sophisticated organic molecules. Table 1 shows a partial list. This list is important because it contains the chemical building blocks of life--and they seem to be everywhere in the universe, not just in our solar system. Scientists with a bit more intelligence than I and much better crystal balls, conjecture that there are probably other civilizations on the planets of other stars in the far off galaxies. Somewhere, some intelligent being is probably asking: "When did it all begin?"



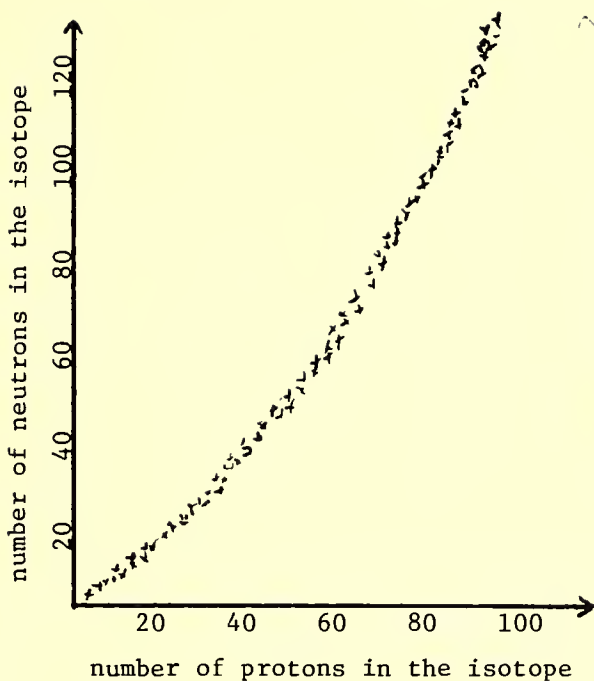


FIGURE 1 A chart of the stable nuclei.

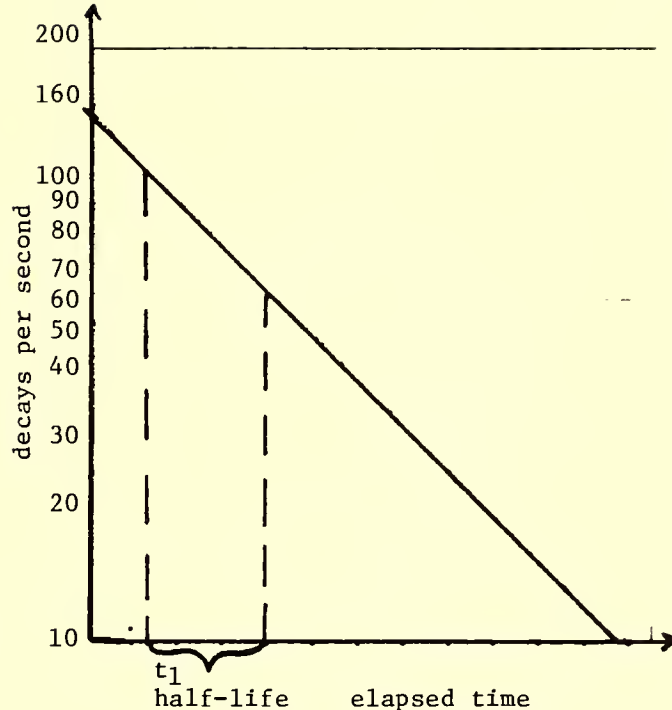


FIGURE 2 Graph of the decay of a radioactive isotope. The half-life is the time that it takes for the decay rate to decrease by a factor of two.

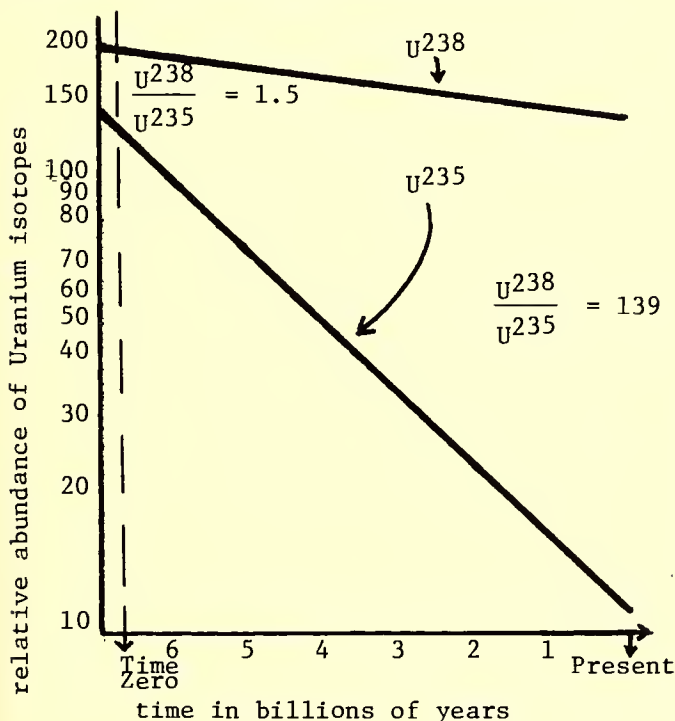


FIGURE 3 A semi-logarithmic graph showing the relative abundance of two isotopes of Uranium as a function of time. By measuring the abundance ratio now (139:1) and knowing the ratio at the beginning, one can measure the age of the universe.

ammonia	formic acid
water	hydrogen sulfide
hydroxyl radical	methylacetylene
formaldehyde	hydrogen
carbon monoxide	formamide
hydrogen cyanide	silicon monoxide
methyl alcohol	acetaldehyde

TABLE 1

A partial list of complicated organic molecules found in interstellar space, in order of finding.

Often a reader finds that the symbolism in William Butler Yeats is not rendered less complex when attacked symbol by symbol. Then it is sometimes rewarding to choose only one of the poem's symbols to probe. For instance, in the short five-stanzaed "Byzantium" a dazzling kaleidoscope of rather terrifying images greets the reader. Certain images recur surfacing as slight variants of their initial form. One of the more immediately noticeable of these ends the first stanza, appears at the end of the third stanza, and probably controls the fifth and last stanza altogether. That is the image offered in "The fury and the mire of human veins," "And all complexities of mire and blood," and "Astraddle on the dolphin's mire and blood/ Spirit after Spirit! . . . Break bitter furies of complexity."

What becomes at once clear about these images is that the first two seem to be solely abstractions while the third one seems to be tied to a concrete symbol. That symbol is dolphin, which figures twice in the last stanza: in the first line and in the final one, "the dolphin's mire and blood" and "That dolphin-torn, that gong-tormented sea." It would be difficult to decide which of the two usages is the more startling, for both are violent images that hurtle upon the reader and reverberate. But the most startling point is the appearance of a playful, peaceful mammal as a component in violent imagery. One might well wonder how come. The answer can only be a suggestion from what lies behind the dolphin as symbol that a powerful and provocative image emerges to symbolize the disciplined human intellect.

That proposition can be entertained by looking at two historical periods, a classical one and a medieval one.

At the time of "Byzantium" Yeats was enjoying his very complex second mythological phase. For imagery he selected the Age of Pericles and Constantinople at its eleventh century zenith. It is easy to think that Yeats's selection of the two periods stems from his own aims and ideas in art. "Yeats was constructing a startling edifice from fragments; the two Byzantium poems and A Dialogue of Self and Soul . . . more than justify his system."<sup>1</sup> Because it was formed in units of blocks and single figures, construction of startling edifices from fragments is as noticeable in the Parthenon as it is in the fragmentally formed mosaics of Byzantine art.<sup>2</sup> Both of the periods are golden periods. Both especially expressed their intensity in marble and in gilt. Both found strength in limiting painting to a few bold colors. Both deemed their smithies golden and gave them special regard as the Emperor's own. Both oriental Christian Byzantium and Periclean Phidian Athens crowned western civilization. Both professed the enduring values of the mind and spirit. Solemn, epical, enormous Phidian sculptured portraits, together with the Periclean strength of character, have through the ages exemplified the high aim of their century. Byzantine art reflected the universal in the continuity of its painted vaults and arches and of its mosaic walls and floors. Like its Athenian counterpart it spoke then and speaks now--solemnly, epically, cosmically.

Both the Christian imperial period and the pagan Athenian one valued the dolphin as symbol. And had Yeats calculated on a single symbol to reap the greatest vitality simultaneously from both periods, he could scarcely have selected a more provocative image than that of the dolphin.

The medieval dolphin standing for love, freedom, generosity, gentleness and pleasure came in heraldry with its plentiful tournament trappings to represent affection for children and Christian charity. Also figuring in life's routine activities, the dolphin was displayed on china and glassware and was carved into the design of chairs, beds and tables. Yet the medieval dolphin spelled more than decoration, grace and Christian attitude. In associating with life's diversions it did not neglect life's central meaning. Central to medieval man was, of course, the

church. Art to medieval man was Christian art. When the medieval dolphin graced fine art it emphasized the Christian connotation of diligence, swiftness and love. It adorned a papal shield where it signified what a dolphin with anchor or trident had meant to the early Christians--the soul of the church.

In the Middle Ages the soul of the church was the state reached by the complete subjugation of the flesh to the mind and spirit. The Figure on the Cross, the medievalist's omnipresent symbol, represented the supreme disciplined intellect.

The classical dolphin is no less a deeply significant symbol of man's intellectual force. Yeats's dolphin risking all it is to convey the golden smithies through the flood is not an association new to dolphin imagery, for the dolphin as salvager of man's poetic destiny appears in one of the oldest dolphin myths.<sup>3</sup>

Condemned to die by the seamen conveying him home, Arion dressed himself in his poet's ceremonial robes to sing the difficult highpitched "Orthian" and brave the sailors' threat. He was not overwhelmed by the reality of imminent chaos or by the meaninglessness of his absurd death sentence. When the sailors threw him overboard a dolphin, salvation symbol of ark or chest, salvaging man's poetic destiny, bore the calm and undaunted poet onward toward immortality.<sup>4</sup>

Another myth involving another set of mariners encountering a dolphin points again to the dolphin as representing superior intellect. It underlines the symbol of the dolphin as a foremost intellectual power of the ancient world. Sailing about looking for the proper spot to erect a shrine to Apollo, Cretans lost their way when a dolphin rescued them from their confusion and led them to the place that they would find. The resultant Shrine of Delphi took its name from Delphinus (meaning dolphin). Again dolphin is suggestive of the ark, for the Shrine of Delphi was refuge to the poor in spirit and haven to the devout. Apollo's spirit, which the myth has leading the questing Cretans, spoke through the Delphic oracles to those seeking healing and intelligence. Representing an accumulation of knowledge in all phases of human existence, the oracles placed the Delphi shrine close to the center of classical intellectual life. Because the very name Delphi attracted those seeking guidance, the dolphin both literally and symbolically figured as guiding spirit to the human intellect.

The oracles further associated the dolphin spirit with disciplined human action because Delphi's god was the god of poetry, music, song. He was kindred spirit to the music-loving dolphin, rescuer of Arion, guide of the Apollo devotees, servant and savior of the human intellect. Professor Vincent Scully substantiates this thought in The Earth, the Temple and the Gods: Greek Sacred Architecture:

Clearly enough, Apollo is intellect, discipline, and purity--central, as so many modern writers have insisted, to the archaic formulation of some of Hellenic society's most nobly human ends--but, equally clearly the site [of Delphi (of the Dolphin)] tells us that Apollo is those qualities embodied in an implacably heroic force.<sup>5</sup>

Yeats's dolphin bears on its rescuing back the "golden smithies of the Emperor," the artists, the poets, the superior beings of intellect. Arion had called on his poet's discipline, his intellectual strength, to surmount the "bitter furies of complexity," "The fury and the mire of human veins." He survived by affirming life, which to him was the life of the intellect, the supreme aesthetic. Many a Yeatsian poem is just such an affirmation. It affirms the intellectual life force that not only brings order out of complexity, but gives to that order a unity of being and a dignity that makes the aesthetic life capable of enduring tragedy.

An aid to interpreting the Yeats's flood might be found in a Dionysian infant myth. Here it is the dolphin image as a seaworthy chest that guides the infant savior safely through treacherous waters.

Another Dionysian myth permits relating the enduring superior quality



of the intellect suggested in the poem to the dolphin as well as to the artist. That the dolphin has an intelligence equal, if not superior, to that of human beings is no new thought. Lucian and Oppian testify to the general belief of the classical age that the dolphin had a humanlike intelligence, which, along with the dolphin's mysterious kindness to men, each of these writers attributes to the incident of the Tyrrhenian pirates whom Dionysus turned into dolphins.

The myth sees the transformation of man's evil nature into that of the peaceable, amiable dolphin. As the dolphin apparently does no harm except to its natural archenemy, the shark, it is, of course, a harmless creature. The dolphin, though, goes beyond doing no harm to doing active good. At least to man. It is unique in the realm of nature for a creature in its natural state to proffer assistance and friendship to human beings. The dolphin is the creature expressing that superior quality. Not a part of man's daily environment, nonetheless, the dolphin through the centuries has herded fish for man, guided his ships, rescued human beings floundering in an inhospitable ocean and selected human companions. The Tyrrhenian pirates myth would render evil nature into not simply a better condition but into a best condition. In turning the pirates into dolphins Dionysus surpassed the act of making them harmless by making them active agents of good. He endowed them with an enduring superior quality.

"Byzantium" symbolism flashes a strong emotional attack with the constant interplay between images of eternity and images of death forming a mosaic of battling forms. The power of the intellect is balanced against the force of the sensual. Eternity opposes death. Birth agony stands with death torment. The overall effect might read: never birth without death, never creation without totality--total dread, total risk, total commitment--immortality only through destruction.

Specifically, the golden smithies of the emperor break the flood astraddle the dolphin, which apparently has dared the greatest risks a dolphin can encounter: that of foundering and that of being seriously wounded. Mire might signify foundering, being trapped by the tide, a particular hazard to the bottlenose and the common dolphin. It might also signal the risk of being stuck in the mud of humanity, soiled with the dirt of the world, contaminated with the filth of worldliness. Yeats's dolphin has risked a foundering death in humanity's mire, as well as a bleeding death from wounds inflicted by its enemy.

Astraddle the active agents of good, astride the symbol of the superior intellect, the golden artists risk the flood and break it.

In a curious way the symbols of his [Yeats's] poetry become at once more important than what they symbolize. . . . But the symbols in [his poetry] also have many further connotations, particularly in the light they throw on one another when placed in opposition. In Yeats's poetry we are taken again and again beyond the limits of the situation or picture he originally presents. . . . His aim was to reach through to universal realizations rooted in the subconscious mind.<sup>6</sup>

The quotation seems especially appropriate to "Byzantium"'s last two stanzas.

At midnight on the Emperor's pavement flit  
Flames that no faggot feeds, nor steel has lit,  
Nor storm disturbs . . . .

"Flames that no faggot feeds" suggests knowledge. Knowledge can feed itself. Knowledge begets knowledge. Wisdom begets wisdom. Wisdom, again, is, and is the product of, the disciplined human intellect.

Often associated with Aphrodite, the dolphin in a variant of the Cyprian arrival, replaces the shell, the womb. Within any symbol significant paradoxes intermingle and move in juxtaposition. In Aphrodite's company the dolphin's nature is demonstrated just as paradoxically in symbolizing love.



Although it retains its basic symbolism of immortality, the dolphin also assumes in association with shell or womb the quality of generation. It blends kaleidoscopically the love the uterus signifies with other interpretations of love--the love of the creator for the creature, the love of the servant for the lord, the love of compassion and brotherliness and the love of parent for offspring.

Love begets love. Aphrodite, goddess of love, gives birth to Eros, godling of love. Eros, in turn, begets love with his bow (symbol of the womb) and arrow (of course, a phallic symbol). This image permits the hermaphroditic suggestion to emerge. Even more than this, creator and male and female creatures are all contained in one form--the symbol of love, Eros, or the symbol of love, the dolphin.

Just as love begetting love becomes an interpretation of the dolphin symbol when the dolphin is associated with a figure of love, Yeats's use of the dolphin symbol in association with the disciplined artistic intellect, the artist himself, places the symbol in such a light as to emphasize that aspect of the dolphin symbol.

"Flames begotten of flames," might be knowledge begotten of knowledge, superior intellect begotten of superior intellect or the disciplined intellect begotten of the disciplined intellect. So it appears that the first part of the fourth stanza meets the poem's ending: "These images that yet/ Fresh images beget."

It presents again kaleidoscopically what the poem as a whole seems to do. That is, to offer a pattern of images that continually form new patterns repeatedly reading: no storm of hostility or no threat of chaos disturbs those enduring values of the mind and spirit born of the disciplined intellect. Golden smithies, artists, active agents of good, knowledge and wisdom--all of these images of the intellect that yet fresh images beget ride with Yeats's "Byzantium" dolphin onward toward immortality.

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<sup>1</sup>Lillian Herlands Hornstein et al., The Reader's Companion to World Literature (New York, 1956), p. 489.

<sup>2</sup>It is generally asserted that Phidias, a most golden of golden smithies, was not only the ruling spirit in Greek art, which of course included city planning, but was so much an adviser to Pericles that political enemies attacked Pericles through Phidias. Naturally Yeats would be attracted to the artist whose superior intellect directed not just art but world affairs, and to the spirit and climate constructing such edifices of the mind.

<sup>3</sup>On page 60 of her work The Dolphin in the Literature and Art of Greece and Rome, dissertation (Menasha, Wisconsin, 1929), Eunice Burr Stebbins sums up Hermann Usener's careful work on the flood myths by explaining that Usener unified the cumulation of what had seemed to be "a multitude of folk tales, . . . in which the dolphin plays a part . . . into a great main theme that underlies the several versions, . . . This theme originates in the rescue from the flood in an ark, . . . goes to the mutation of an infant god in a chest, rescue or conveyance in a ship, and in the final stage of rescue, on the back of a fish." (A god or man riding a dolphin was common legend in classical Greece, the rider growing to be most often Eros.)

<sup>4</sup>Pericles might well have been a direct spiritual descendant of Arion in his calm and undaunted frame of mind in moments of extreme stress. As both were men of dispassionate intellect influenced by the artist's spirit, their appeal for Yeats would seem sure.

<sup>5</sup>(New Haven, 1962), p. 100.

<sup>6</sup>"Introduction," The British Poets in Chief Modern Poets of England and America, ed. Sanders, Nelson, and Rosenthal, 4th ed. (New York, 1962), I, 4-I.

FOUNDERS RE-FOUNDED

Slow  
O, slow  
and painful  
that first march of  
mortared, fire-fired bricks  
and fire-fired minds  
far-visioned  
to mould into some  
indestructible Essentiality  
the Light  
Inward and outward  
Spirit-moved and moving  
half-a-hundred then  
and since and yet  
a thousand times ten  
lit again and again...  
Something there is  
that cannot die or fall  
or fail-- The Same  
that hovered when they rose  
rises still and again and even  
whether there be walls at all--  
Let us remove our shoes.  
The Bush is not consumed.

Written for the first worship service held in the New Founders Hall  
on Tuesday, August 19, 1975.

G. R. GORDH, JR. AND E. G. PARKER: CREATIVITY IN MATHEMATICS--  
A DIALOGUE OF METHODS

"We see how beautifully the mathematician  
and the poet agree in that fundamental view of  
invention consisting of a choice."

--Jacques Hadamard, The Psychology of  
Invention in the Mathematical Field

## INTRODUCTION

The creative process in any field is probably best understood by those who have experienced it directly. We hope to let the reader experience the creative process in mathematics vicariously by leading him along the distinct paths each of us has followed in solving an interesting and non-trivial mathematical question. (The original solution to this question was obtained by the famous mathematician L. E. J. Brouwer in 1910. Each of us solved the problem while in graduate school without prior knowledge of Brouwer's work.) The serious reader should equip himself with paper, pencil, patience, and a willingness to ponder new and unusual ideas.

Our question can be stated simply as follows: "Does there exist in the Euclidean plane an indecomposable continuum containing more than one point?" The answer can be stated even more simply, since it is either "yes" or "no." In order to make the question meaningful to non-mathematicians, we shall need to define the term "indecomposable continuum" using familiar concepts of geometry. With this goal in mind, we begin by reviewing some of the basic properties of Euclidean plane geometry and of mathematical systems generally.

## MATHEMATICAL SYSTEMS

Historically speaking the most important example of a mathematical system is Euclidean plane geometry. It possesses the following essential features:

1. It contains undefined (or primitive) terms (e.g., point and line).
2. It contains axioms (or postulates) about the undefined terms (e.g., each pair of points determines a unique line).
3. It contains definitions based on the undefined terms and prior definitions (e.g., a circle consists of the points at a fixed distance from a given point).
4. It contains theorems which are logical consequences of the axioms (e.g., the angles of an equilateral triangle are equal).

Undefined terms are required to avoid circular or vague definitions. Similarly, axioms make it possible to give rigorous logical proofs without infinite regression.

There are essentially two ways of creating new mathematics. One is to create a new system; the other is to create within a given system. Non-Euclidean geometry was created by men bold enough to negate Euclid's famous "parallel postulate." The solution to our question involved creation within a system. Since our question deals specifically with the Euclidean plane, we must adopt the undefined terms and axioms of traditional plane geometry. On the other hand, we shall need definitions (e.g., "indecomposable continuum") which do not appear in classical geometry.

## CONTINUUM--THE INTUITION

In spite of the fact that terms like "point" and "line" are undefined,



we all have a rather clear picture of what they mean intuitively. Moreover, we "know" what a "circle" is before we are told that it is the "set of all points at a fixed distance from a given point." The concept of a "continuum" is much more difficult to grasp than the familiar concepts of "point," "line," or "circle" because it is intended to abstract the geometrical properties of arbitrary physical objects rather than of specific classes of objects.

#### INTUITIVE DEFINITION

The set  $S$  in the Euclidean plane is a continuum if  $S$  possesses every geometrical property which is common to all physical objects.

If it happened that no geometrical property were common to all physical objects, then our intuitive definition would imply that every set of points in the plane is a continuum. We shall try to convince you by means of examples that there are sets of points in the Euclidean plane which are not continua according to our intuitive definition. Choose distinct points  $p$  and  $q$  in the Euclidean plane to be used in the descriptions of our three examples.

EXAMPLE 1. Let  $X$  denote the set of points which comprise the unique line determined by  $p$  and  $q$ . Recall that Euclid's axioms require that every line be infinite in extent. It follows that the line  $X$  is not a continuum since one of the most obvious geometrical properties of all physical objects is that of being "bounded in size."

EXAMPLE 2. Let  $Y$  denote the set consisting precisely of the two points  $p$  and  $q$ . Since every physical object is "connected" and  $Y$  does not share this property, we conclude the  $Y$  can not be a continuum.

EXAMPLE 3. Let  $Z$  denote the set of points on the line  $X$  which lie strictly between  $p$  and  $q$  (not including  $p$  or  $q$ ). The point  $p$  does not belong to the set  $Z$ , and yet there is no positive distance between the point  $p$  and the set  $Z$ . (The reader is urged to draw a picture here.) But doesn't every physical object (or at least our idealization of it) have the property that each point outside of it is some positive distance from it (even if the distance may be imperceptible to the human eye). We say that the set  $Z$  is not "closed," while all physical objects are "closed." It follows that the set  $Z$  is not a continuum. (The property of being "closed" is admittedly much more subtle than the previous properties. It will be clarified further in the next section.)

If we have succeeded in conveying the intuitive notion of the word "continuum," then the reader will agree that every line segment (the set of points on a line between and including two fixed points), circle, triangle, and rectangle is a continuum. Moreover, each plane figure which can be drawn in its entirety without lifting the pencil is a continuum.

#### CONTINUUM--THE DEFINITION

If we wish to have a definition for the word "continuum" which qualifies it for inclusion in the system of Euclidean geometry, we must define it in terms of the established concepts of that system. In particular, the definition can not include the term "physical object" even though that is the concept we hope to abstract.

It is far from obvious what the appropriate definition of "continuum" should be. However, mathematicians have discovered that the conditions "closed," "bounded in size," and "connected" can be made mathematically precise, and that, taken together, they provide a satisfactory definition.

DEFINITION: The set  $S$  in the Euclidean plane is a continuum if  $S$  is "closed," "bounded in size," and "connected." We are left with the task of providing precise geometrical definitions for the terms "closed," "bounded in size," and "connected."

DEFINITION: The set  $S$  in the Euclidean plane is closed if for each point outside of  $S$  there exists a circle  $C$  with center  $p$  such that no point of the set  $S$



is inside the circle C. The reader should have little trouble convincing himself that the set Z from Example 3 does not satisfy this definition, and hence is not "closed."

DEFINITION: The set S in the Euclidean plane is bounded in size if there exists a circle C such that each point of the set S is inside the circle C.

It is one of the peculiarities of mathematics that certain concepts which are intuitively quite simple to understand are difficult to define precisely. "Connectedness" is such a concept. It happens to be easier to define the term "connected" for sets which are assumed to be closed and bounded in size than for arbitrary sets. Such a definition will be entirely adequate for our purposes.

DEFINITION: Let S be a set in the Euclidean plane which is closed and bounded in size. The set S is connected if there do not exist two sets A and B which satisfy all of these conditions: (a) A and B together comprise all of S, (b) each of A and B is closed and bounded in size, and (c) A and B contain no point in common. To verify that the set  $Y=[p,q]$  which was discussed in Example 2 is not connected, it suffices to let  $A=[p]$  and  $B=[q]$ . Since the sets A and B clearly satisfy conditions (a), (b), and (c) of the definition, Y is not connected. Conditions (a), (b) and (c) in the definition of the word "connected" should be interpreted as saying that S is separated into pieces A and B, i.e., that S is disconnected. Thus the set S is connected provided that it is not disconnected.

Now that we have established a rigorous mathematical definition for the term "continuum," the intuitive definition from the previous section is discarded (except as an aid to the imagination). The rigorous definition becomes the sole arbiter as to which sets of points are continua and which are not. Furthermore, any conflicts between the intuitive definition and the precise definition are settled in favor of the latter. In this vein, consider the question: "Is a single point a continuum?" It is not difficult to produce arguments both pro and con based on the intuitive definition. (The reader is urged to attempt this.) However, the rigorous definition allows no possibility for argument. The answer is clearly affirmative.

#### THE QUESTION

A question debated throughout the history of science is whether there exist bits of physical matter ("atoms") which can not be decomposed into smaller pieces. Since the concept of "continuum" is intended to abstract the geometrical properties of physical matter, it is natural to try to formulate this question for continua. To do this, we need to define precisely what it means for a continuum to be "decomposable." We offer a definition with the hope that it will appear reasonable.

DEFINITION: Let S be a continuum in the Euclidean plane. The continuum S is decomposable if there exist continua A and B each of which is properly contained in S and so that A and B together comprise S. The continuum S is called indecomposable if it is not decomposable.

Do there exist indecomposable continua? The answer is clearly affirmative since every point is a continuum (as we have observed in the previous section), and every point is certainly indecomposable. Thus to make the question interesting we must eliminate from our consideration continua consisting of only one point. This demand leads directly to the question posed in the introduction: "Does there exist in the Euclidean plane an indecomposable continuum containing more than one point?"

Before reading further, the reader should convince himself that every continuum he can draw or even imagine is decomposable unless it reduces to a single point. In spite of this, indecomposable continua other than points do exist. In the next two sections we shall attempt to describe our individual efforts to discover indecomposable continua which are not points.

## AN INTUITIVE GEOMETRICAL APPROACH

"Does there exist an indecomposable continuum which is not a point?"

It is reasonable to think not and to justify that conclusion as follows. Consider any continuum  $S$  containing at least two points, say  $p$  and  $q$ , lying in the Euclidean plane. Draw a line  $L$  having  $p$  on one side of it and  $q$  on the other. Take  $A$  to be the set of all points of  $S$  which lie either on the line  $L$  or on the side of  $L$  which contains  $p$ . Similarly, take  $B$  to be the set of all points of  $S$  which lie either on the line  $L$  or on the side of  $L$  which contains  $q$ . In Figure 1 the sets  $A$  and  $B$  described in this manner are continua which decompose  $S$ .

Unfortunately the situation depicted in Figure 1 is misleadingly simple, as is evidenced in Figure 2. Here the set  $A$  is not a continuum since it is not connected. Consequently  $A$  and  $B$  do not decompose  $S$ . This is not to suggest that  $S$  can not be decomposed at all. In fact  $S$  can be decomposed by "cutting" it with an appropriate line segment  $J$  as indicated in Figure 3.

These simple examples suggest that one might construct an indecomposable continuum by making it so "crooked" that no line segment, no matter how carefully chosen, could be used to decompose it. Let us indicate how this intuition can be realized. We begin with a continuum  $S_1$  consisting of a square and its interior. Inside of  $S_1$  we construct a continuum  $S_2$  which is "crooked" in  $S_1$  as shown in Figure 4. Inside of  $S_2$  we construct a continuum  $S_3$  which is "crooked" in  $S_2$  just as  $S_2$  is "crooked" in  $S_1$ . This process is continued indefinitely to produce a sequence  $S_1, S_2, S_3, \dots, S_n, \dots$  of continua each one of which is "crooked" in its predecessor. Certainly each of the continua  $S_n$  is decomposable. The important fact is that there is no single line segment which serves to decompose them all.

Let  $S$  denote the set of points common to all of the continua  $S_1, S_2, S_3, \dots, S_n, \dots$ . It can be shown that the common part of any decreasing sequence of continua is again a continuum; hence  $S$  is a continuum. Given any line segment whatsoever, there is a continuum  $S_j$  in the given sequence which is not decomposed by  $J$ . Since the continuum  $S$  is contained in  $S_j$  it follows that  $S$  is not decomposed by  $J$  either. In particular, no line segment decomposes the continuum  $S$ .

This argument does not establish rigorously that  $S$  is an indecomposable continuum; however, similar reasoning can be used to produce a rigorous proof of this fact.

## A LOGICAL ANALYTICAL APPROACH

Let us consider the question "Does there exist an indecomposable continuum which is not a point?" from a different perspective. We shall assume that such an indecomposable continuum does in fact exist and then attempt to discover the logical consequences of such an assumption. If any consequence of this assumption were to contradict an axiom or a previously established theorem of the system, then the assumption would be false. In this case the question would be settled in the negative. Otherwise, we would hope to discover some facts about such indecomposable continua which would help us to settle the problem in the affirmative. The latter possibility is, of course, what actually occurs. In this approach we consider facts and concepts of the system which appear to be related to the notion of indecomposability. Next we attempt to discover new relationships among these facts and concepts which involve indecomposability. One of the concepts involving continua which shares some common ground with indecomposability is known as irreducibility.

DEFINITION: The continuum  $S$  in the Euclidean plane is called irreducible between the points  $p$  and  $q$  provided that  $S$  contains  $p$  and  $q$  but no continuum contained properly in  $S$  contains both  $p$  and  $q$ . While it is difficult even to imagine an indecomposable continuum, it is easy to give an example of an irreducible continuum. Let  $p$  and  $q$  be distinct points in the Euclidean plane, and let  $S$  denote the line segment with end points  $p$  and  $q$ . Clearly  $S$  is a continuum which is irreducible

between  $p$  and  $q$ . (The reader is encouraged to convince himself that a circle is a continuum which is not irreducible between any pair of points.)

The following theorem which provides a formal relationship between indecomposability and irreducibility can be proved logically without prior knowledge of the existence of indecomposable continua containing more than one point.

**THEOREM:** Let  $S$  be a continuum in the Euclidean plane. The continuum  $S$  is indecomposable provided that there exist three distinct points so that  $S$  is irreducible between each two of them. This theorem together with the observation that a line segment is an irreducible continuum provides the motivation necessary to construct an indecomposable continuum with more than one point. With the line segment in mind as a simple example, we first describe a general method for constructing continua which are irreducible between two given points. This method is then modified to yield continua which are irreducible between any two of three given points. Our theorem assures us that continua constructed by the second method are in fact indecomposable.

For two points  $p$  and  $q$  in the plane, define a chain from  $p$  to  $q$  to be a finite sequence of circles with  $p$  inside the first one and  $q$  inside the last one as illustrated in Figure 5. The individual circles in the chain are called links. Let  $C_1$  be any chain from  $p$  to  $q$ , and let  $C_2$  be a chain from  $p$  to  $q$  inside of  $C_1$ . Continue in this manner to construct a sequence of chains  $C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots, C_n, \dots$  from  $p$  to  $q$  each of which is contained in its predecessor and such that the diameter of the links become arbitrarily small. It can be shown that the set  $S$  of points common to all the chains is a continuum which is irreducible between  $p$  and  $q$ .

We shall now modify this process to obtain an indecomposable continuum  $S$ . Let  $p, q$ , and  $r$  be distinct points in the Euclidean plane. Construct a sequence of chains  $C_1, C_2, C_3, \dots, C_n, \dots$  according to the following rules (see Figure 6):

- (a) Chains  $C_1, C_4, C_7, \dots$  go from  $p$  to  $q$  with  $r$  in a middle link.
- (b) Chains  $C_2, C_5, C_8, \dots$  go from  $p$  to  $r$  with  $q$  in a middle link.
- (c) Chains  $C_3, C_6, C_9, \dots$  go from  $q$  to  $r$  with  $p$  in a middle link.

Let  $S$  denote the set of points common to all of the chains. Since  $S$  is also the common part of chains  $C_1, C_4, C_7, \dots$ , it follows from rule (a) that  $S$  is irreducible between  $p$  and  $q$ . Rules (b) and (c) apply in a similar way to imply that  $S$  is irreducible between  $p$  and  $r$  and between  $q$  and  $r$ . Our theorem assures us that  $S$  is an indecomposable continuum.

#### SOME FINAL REMARKS

The reader has likely observed that both geometric intuition and logical analysis were actually employed in both approaches to the problem. In the first approach, geometrical intuition was used to arrive at an example of an indecomposable continuum. Logical analysis is required to verify that the example actually possesses the desired properties. In the second approach, logical analysis provided clues which led to correct geometrical intuition. It is worth noting that it is possible to prove the existence of indecomposable continua with more than one point purely logically without ever producing a single such example.

It is strange that in spite of the fact that it is difficult to exhibit even a single example of an indecomposable continuum consisting of more than one point, it can be proved rigorously that there actually exist more indecomposable continua than decomposable continua. Because of this apparently paradoxical situation, indecomposable continua are involved in numerous problems concerning sets of points in the Euclidean plane.



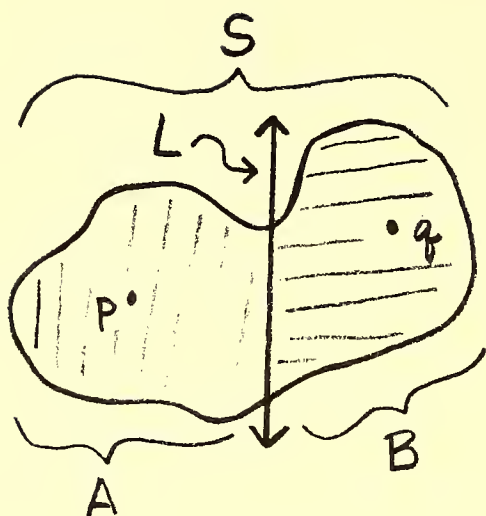


Figure 1

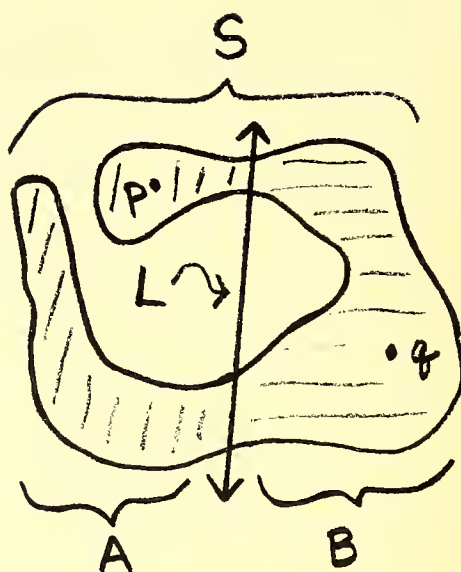


Figure 2

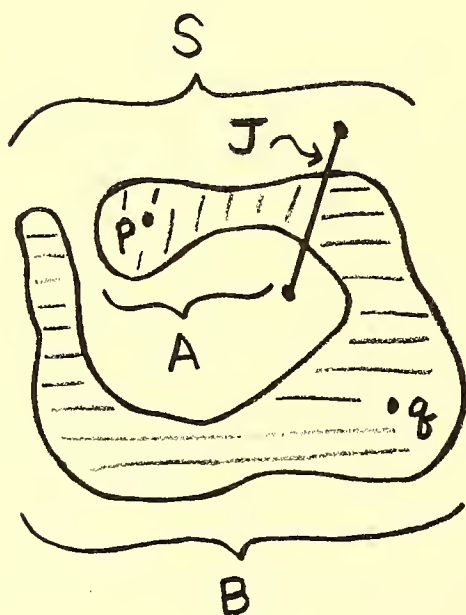


Figure 3

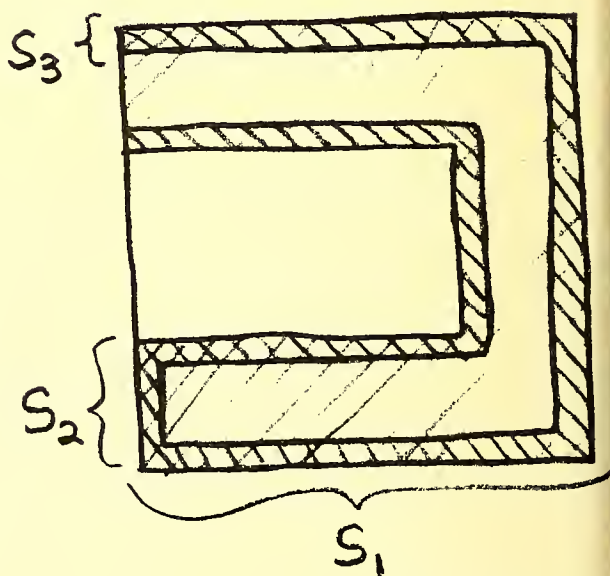


Figure 4



Figure 5

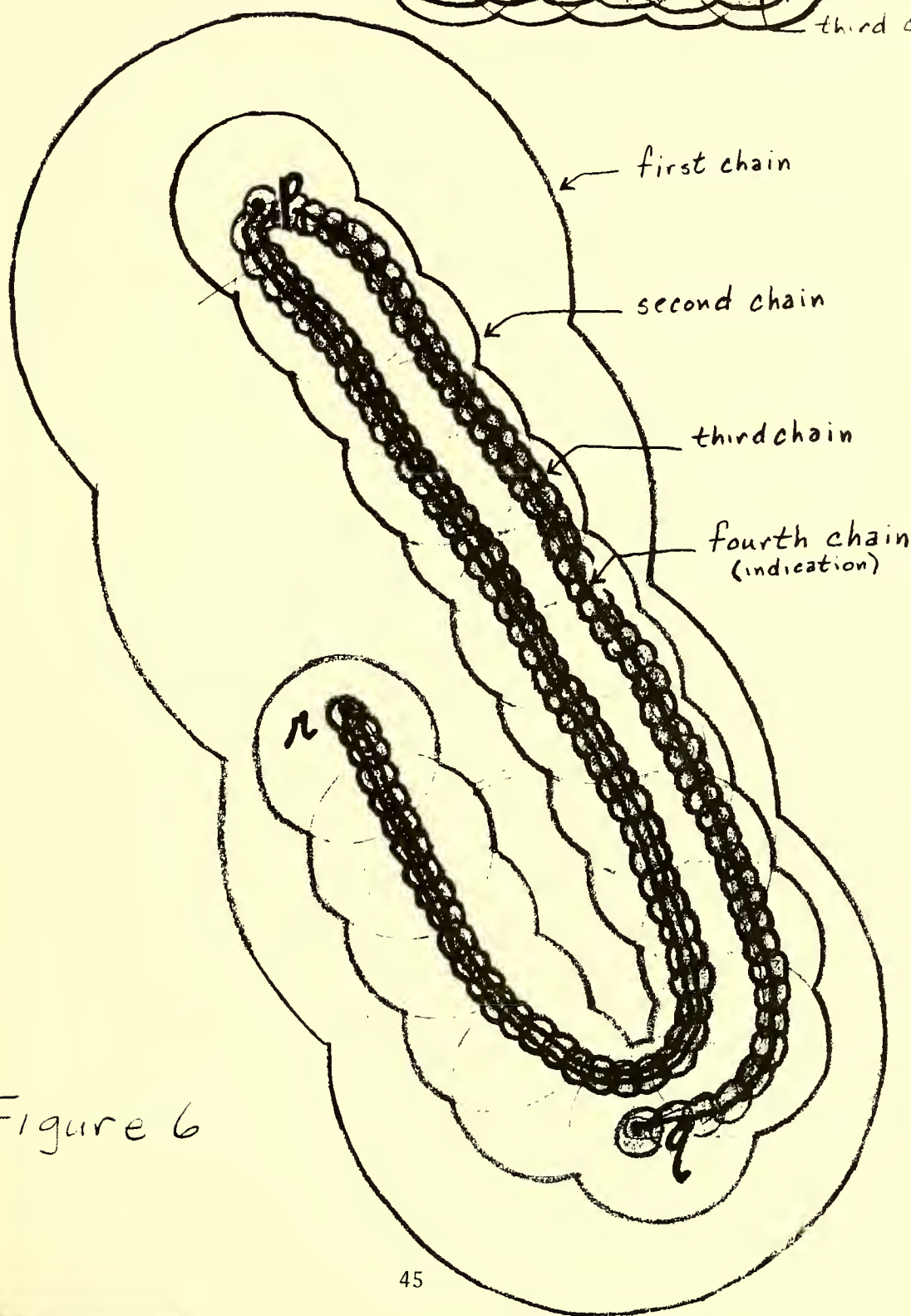
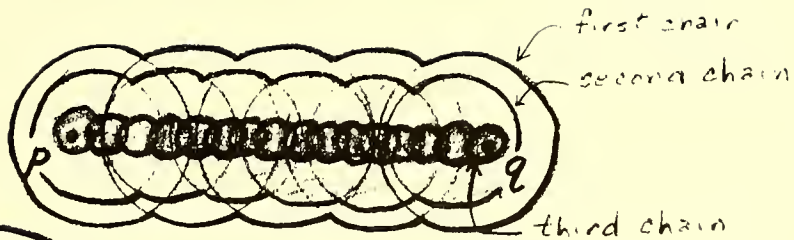


Figure 6

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# GUILFORD REVIEW

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# GUILFORD REVIEW



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## EDITORIAL

This issue of the Guilford Review centers on Women in Change, and features writing by Guilford graduates. Three recent recipients of Danforth Graduate Fellowships are represented, along with several faculty members and visiting speakers.

Some of this material came out of last Spring's Colloquium on Women as Shapers of Culture, but most comes more directly out of the rising consciousness and active lives of women--and men. Although most of the material focuses on the experience of women and children, we have sought out a grand variety of modes and styles: scholarship, analysis, passionate but also comic poetry, relaxed narration, personal reminiscence, photography.

The spring issue of the Guilford Review will look at women in the social and political context, and draw more heavily on the sciences and social sciences. The Editorial Board would enjoy examining possible contributions to the issue from people associated with Guilford College.

## NOTE

The Guilford Review is published in October and March by Guilford College. It is limited to the writing of faculty, staff, alumni, guest speakers, and others associated with the College. Material for publication should be addressed to Editor, The Guilford Review, Guilford College, West Friendly Avenue, Greensboro, NC 27410.

Copies may be ordered from the same address at \$2.50 per copy, \$5.00 for a year's subscription. The following back issues are available for \$1.50 each: #2, "Woman and Mythology"; #3, "Myth in Multiple Perspective"; #4, Poetry and Fiction; and #5, "Creative Process in the Arts and Sciences."



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first floors

for marge piercy

we have sharpened our fingers in silence  
thinning walls a splinter at a time  
widening keyholes and doorjambs  
their floors have been undermined by a web of tunnels  
each strand no thicker than a needle  
now we will inscribe our names in stone and clay  
to build a new house  
this language has sunk deep foundations  
raised a roof that can disregard wind winter the apocalypse  
a poem constructs a table wide enough for teacups  
a novel hangs curtains in all the windows  
by summer we will have squash and papyrus in the garden  
and scented candles to read by  
if you are a traveler  
you may stop the night for free  
though sometimes we sing in our sleep until dawn

still lives

1

i own no map  
to this white landscape of embracings  
your fingers have reshaped coastlines  
and turned my bed unrecognizable  
all landmarks are lost in the disruption of shadow

a thin pitch of light opens on the sheets  
your mouth is the source of the sea  
which rocks beneath the bed

my hands are unfamiliar  
traveling across your back like pilgrims  
to seek lost shrines in your skin  
the horizon has contracted  
erasing the pale silhouette of continents

the light thickens  
until breath shivers in my throat  
i lose the rhythm of your pulse

dampness curls around my neck  
i can't explain the shift in light  
or the sudden silence of your shoulders  
when night collapses between us  
you finally admit to the virginity of my skin

stark awake at 5 a.m. without a candle  
 to ease night into full morning  
 the walls of this cell seem thicker  
 blood trembles in my veins  
 my eyes ache from straining through black  
 for some glint of gold or holiness  
 the droned litany begins  
 a fainting weight through my limbs  
 the clash of black and red beneath the lids  
 pain beads across my forehead  
 this body's devotions are not timely  
 rising in unattended dawns  
 to tell its needs, fingers tense on a cold rosary  
 the face of the worshipped blurs: at this hour  
 no ritual separates sacrament from sin.

mandarin lake soothes the metal heat,  
 softening it into filmy layers  
 which descend in stripes along my legs.  
 i lean into the water like an invalid,  
 yielding straitened muscles  
 into a nerveless swoon. the sun  
 drops coins on my eyelids.  
 the precise speed of watergliders  
 pulses against my ears. i admire  
 the limewhite of my submerged breasts,  
 the heedless grace of my ankles  
 as they break the water's skin.

she is swimming in hectic circles,  
 droplets loosed like tinsel behind her,  
 the replying current or her rippled breath  
 sways through my hair  
 small mouths of fishes or her fluid fingers  
 open under the curve of my back  
 my skin has lost its borders, warm  
 liquids stopped against no shores,  
 but rocking down to one hot center  
 where we are swimming, swimming.

. . . and at the east of the garden of Eden, he placed the cherubim, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life.                      Genesis 3:24.

"We are here to help you," they smiled, staring at me down the length of the polished seminar room table. White wigs nodded paternally above the forbidding black of magisterial robes. "Do not think of us as your examiners. We are your colleagues and friends." I feigned a smile of deferential confidence in return, but under the table, my fingers tore at ragged cuticles and the callouses on my palms. (Rough surfaces fascinate the touch: they are so palpable, so real.) As my concentration sank into my fingertips, the voice slid past my forehead once again. I strained to re-focus on what it was saying.

". . . all first year graduate students. We feel that such an evaluation is beneficial to you in clarifying what you think, as well as helpful to us as a department in learning how better to meet your needs. To this end, there are a few questions we would like to ask of you." Here smiles of concern. "To start with, in what school of Christian theology would you situate your own perspective?" Attentive pause.

"Well," I fumbled, "I don't really know that I would want to call myself a Christian." It seemed to take a long time for my words to travel to the other end of the table.

"You 'don't really know'?" The reply was studied, but still smiling. "What do you mean, you 'don't really know'?" The tempo of my tearing fingers increased. I opened my mouth to answer, but instead of my own words, heard only, "You have been here a year as a graduate student in theology. How can you 'not really know' whether or not you are a Christian?" The black-garbed figures and their kindly questions were swelling up larger than life--or perhaps it was I who was shrinking. My repeated efforts at response were suffocated by a giant oil spill spreading through the air of the room, cutting off my space to speak, to think, to breathe. "If you are not in the Christian tradition, where are you?" The question loomed, quivering before me.

". . . where are you? . . . where are you?" It pounded in all my body until I was not sure in fact whether the voice were the inquisitor's or my own. I had to escape. In desperation, I held my breath and lunged head-long for the door. Out the seminar room, down the stairs, through the turnstile and out the heavy glass entrance of the Woodruff Memorial Library for the Arts and Sciences I ran, down a tortuous, rocky path in the night air. Gasping, I dropped my briefcase and continued, faster, with papers fluttering behind me in my wake.

The path disappeared. I kept running--covering the expansive miles that one can cross only in a dream. My legs seemed to be gathering strength from the ground; my head, my whole body felt newly light. A faint glow appeared, beckoning, in the distance. I ceased running from something and started running to. I ducked under gnarled branches and leapt over tangles of growth that seemed not to have been trodden upon in years. Up ahead now, the glow had differentiated into two beams of light, clearly visible, a hill rising towards them at my feet. I was tiring. I stumbled. One final surge of power coursed through me. I bent forward, toiling, straining, climbing--and burst through a gateway guarded by two men in whose swords all the stars of the night sky were reflected with the brilliance of fire.

\* \* \* \* \*



Do I really want to call myself a Christian? The question has occurred to me often of late--in conscious introspection as well as in fitful half-waking, half-sleeping dreams. If I am not in the secure parameters of the Christian tradition, where am I? The answer that has come to me is: no where. Or, as Mary Daly, feminist philosopher-theologian, prefers to write it: now/here. Either way, it is a scary place to be. It is a vulnerable place--one exposed to criticism, condemnation, or simple lack of understanding from self as well as from others. It is a tentative, uncertain, insecure place; it is unfixed and ever-changing. "Now/here" is also, however, a place rich with potential, peopled by increasing numbers of women and men who are dissatisfied with dwelling in the spaces defined for them in the past--whether these spaces were defined by religious tradition, politics, or socio-economic factors. I am convinced that learning to live "now/here" is imperative if we are to shape a more healthy and humane culture in the modern world. I am further convinced that women in particular have an indispensable role to play as the shapers of this new culture. I am finally convinced that such a role is profoundly important material for theological reflection--for it involves no less a theme than that of seeking the way back to the long-lost tree of life. In the following paragraphs, I want briefly to elaborate on these convictions.

First, what does it mean to live "now/here"? It means, simply (which is more simply said than done) abandoning the patterns and prejudices of long-accustomed modes of thinking and being. Among such patterns is that of categorizing in terms of oppositions: mind versus body, reason versus feeling, male versus female, human being versus nature, self versus other, orthodox versus heretic . . . . The list could stretch on endlessly. Such oppositions not only smooth the rough edges of reality down into a delusive distinctness (Who among us is unequivocally "female"--or "male"?). They also, inevitably, foster the oppression of one element by the other in order to protect the oppressor's identity (If the prototypical He-man admits to "female" elements in his personality, his sense of self is threatened.). Unfortunately, such oppressive dichotomizing occurs as commonly in theological thinking as in any other field. The Scholastic doctrine of "non-reciprocity of relations" is a notable case in point: God affects human beings, but remains absolutely unaffected by them: we are mutable, God is immutable; we are weak, but He [sic] is strong. The reasons this kind of doctrine is unfortunate are many. Chief among them: it fosters human passivity and resignation to an oppressive status quo seemingly sanctioned by a static God.

With the abandoning of patterns of the status quo arises a correlative requirement of living now/here: coping with the anxiety attendant upon moving in uncharted terrain. Bereft of models and legitimations from the past, we are in a state without form, threateningly void--but it is from such a state that new creation springs. This creation can have to do with re-shaping our understanding of God--as a being who suffers and changes with his/her world (yes, a being who is as legitimately called "she" as "he"); it can have to do with shaping a new understanding of human persons as rich composites of male and female, mind and body, individual self and communal being; it can have to do with shaping new social ethics freed from old patterns of opposition, competition, intolerance, and oppression, and opened to the challenging possibilities of diversity, tolerance, and co-operation. In all three areas, living now/here means being present-centered and forward-looking, actively engaged in the anxious labor of bringing a new, healthy and humane culture into being. Women, it seems to me, have an indispensable role to play in this creation.

Traditionally, women have been barred from full participation in culture. Decisions and accomplishments in every field--politics, economics,

education, science, theology, and even the arts--have been reserved for the paternal figures in one form or another of magisterial garb. Our very language has systematically deprived women of representation. (Say what you will about "generic" terms. In a recent conversation, a male friend complained to me about a paper I had written using exclusively feminine pronouns. When I asked what was wrong with that, he replied that he felt excluded. To which my only response was, "Aha!") The women's liberation movement is effecting major changes in the traditional situation, opening hitherto-closed areas for women to actualize their untapped potentials in the shaping of culture. It is not necessary to catalogue these changes here. It is necessary, however, to reemphasize the significance of a phrase whose impact has been weakened by banalization: namely, that women's liberation means human liberation. When the oppressed half of a traditional opposition rises up to claim equality and respect, the other half is simultaneously freed--like it or not--from the role of oppressor. The goal of women's up-rising, however, is not mere role-reversal. It is rather an overthrow of the whole pattern of establishing relationships in terms of opposition, of domination and subjugation--and it is further an attempt to replace that pattern with one of the harmonious integration of opposites into well-balanced wholes. For only when women and men are both whole beings, both participating creatures of culture--only then can either group lay claim to being fully human.

The struggle for the liberation of women--and men--into full participation as whole human beings in cultural creation is, it seems to me, a religious struggle. It is a struggle for salvation (for salvation is built on the root salus meaning healthy, which is of the same root as both holy and whole). It is a struggle for transcendence, moving beyond categories and constraints of the past into the creative responsibilities of the here and now. It is an effort to bring into being the community of reconciled humanity, envisioned in the Christian tradition in the patriarchal image of the Kingdom of God; an effort to re-discover the tree of life lost in our semi-self-willed fall from paradise into the delights and dangers of civilization. All these religious themes make the role of women in shaping a culture of liberated human beings apt--even imperative--material for theological reflection. Indeed, only such reflection can guard the women's movement from the peril of absolutizing itself--which peril would re-instigate the tyrannical tendencies that liberation is precisely trying to overcome. For theological reflection reveals that all human transcendence is relativized, and sustained by ultimate transcendence--from which ground comes the strength to cope and to create, even with the anxiety inherent in living now/here.

Mary Daly, originator of the expression "now/here," has coined another term appropriate to mention here--that of the "Fall into freedom." This is a new Fall, answering to the one whereby humanity was expelled from Eden long ago. The original expulsion had to do with eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. To read a bit into the myth, it had to do with learning to make the kinds of clear categorizations on which subsequent civilization has thrived. Such distinctions and definitions have become oppressive, however; they have led to scapegoating and subjugation. What is needed now is a liberation from the absolutized definitions of past (patriarchal) traditions, and a "Fall" into the freedom of discovering new modes of thinking and being. Women can well be the leaders in this Fall, for we have everything to gain from the overthrow of oppression, and nothing to lose but the false security of a restrictively (read, in most instances: domestically) defined place.

I should perhaps note that the Fall into freedom does not necessarily require the rejection of the Christian tradition. For many people, Christianity continues to speak meaningfully and well, and it is not my intention from a stance

outside the Christian church to institute a new brand of reversed inquisition. What the Fall into freedom does require, however, is the rejection of any set of ready-made answers which perpetuate closed-mindedness, intolerance, and servitude. We must surrender our certainties and eat of the fruit of the tree of "not-knowing" in order to find ourselves living, moving, and creatively being now/here. Women, especially, as we struggle for awareness, identities, and relationships different from anything sanctioned in the past, have a vital role to play in the shaping of a culture of fecund freedom. Once we dare to fall, we are on our way back to the garden--and no flaming sword will be able to block our triumphal entry.

\* \* \* \* \*

Sources considered in the composition of this essay:

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\_\_\_\_\_. The Church and the Second Sex. With a new feminist post-Christian introduction by the author. New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1975.



PICKING BLACKBERRIES

On a sweaty Sunday morning  
We went to pick what fruit was  
Not forbidden. Unlike the scuppernong,  
Cultivated for its easy access,  
Blackberries rot on the vine  
Waiting for their scraggly lovers  
To appreciate the black to the bucket.  
Hot flannel shirts and long trousers  
Can't keep them from tearing at  
Our shoulders, our faces, our ankles.  
("When the juices are running,"  
The judge says, "what can you do?")  
We cannot resist this earthen abundance,  
Strewn over to excess in bulbous  
Nodes of sweetness which stain  
Our fingers--the blood of sacrifice.

Summer's solstice and its sordid  
Ritual rings in my head until  
My eyes blur and the red and black  
Lose their ripeness to the  
Crashing hulk of a pained animal.  
(We are all the same in the dark.)

"Why did we pass this way at all?"  
"Why don't the berries ripen at once?"  
"Were we greedy to gather so many?"  
--We children ask such questions  
Until the party that afternoon.

Then, noting the soft white curve of  
Baby Jesse's leg with its coating  
Of blackberry ice cream, I smile  
Through satisfaction and full bellies.  
Loving is no easy virtue.



"Onetwofreefourfivesixsemeightninetenleventwelvehtirteenfourteen-fifteensixteen . . ."

She heard her little brother's voice droning mechanically on the other side of the car, getting way ahead of her in the game. She kept staring hopefully out her window and did not bother to protest that he couldn't possibly be really counting the cows, only running off the numbers until the huge herd was out of sight. That was all you could do when there were that many. She would do it too, if she were lucky enough to see so many.

". . . twentysixtwentysemtwentyeightttwentyne--fifty, fif'onefif' two--"

"'Fifty'!" her older brother shrieked, bouncing gleefully on the seat between them. "Did you hear that? Boy, what a dummy! Don't you even know that it's thirty that comes after twenty? Thirty, forty, then fifty! Boy, how dumb can you get!"

The six-year-old threw a scowl over his shoulder, eyes narrow and bottom lip stuck out. "You better shut up," he muttered.

"Gah, what a--Look, Katie!" the eleven-year-old thrust himself over to his sister's side of the car. "Look at all those cows! You better count 'em quick!"

Katie's insides tightened with excitement as she saw the enormous wealth of cattle he had shown her. There must be thousands--she'd never be able to count them all.

"That ain't fair, is it, Mama?" her little brother stuck his chin over the front seat. "Keith is helping Katie--"

"Don't say 'ain't,' Billy. It's 'izn't.'"

"Well, it izn't fair, is it--?"

"Aw, Billy, I saw 'em anyway," Katie said. The big herd had vanished behind a stand of pine trees before she made it to forty. Now when she turned back to her window all she could see were rows and rows of big fuzzy-leafed plants clutching the sandy dirt with roots like fingers.

"Oh, look, Billy!" sang Keith. "There's the cigarette plants!" He slid forward on the seat and addressed the car at large. "'Member when Billy thought the tobacco plants had cigarettes on 'em? 'Member?" he asked Katie intently. She'd thought so too, but thank heaven Billy had been the first to say it.

"Boy, how stupid can you get!" Keith went on with relish. "Bet you thought the bean plants had little cans hanging on them!" He collapsed into the deep seat of the old car and hooted.

Billy turned his sullen face away from the window. "You better shut up . . . ."

"'Yew bitter shet up!'" Keith hunched up his shoulders and stuck his head out sideways like a turtle and bulged his eyes and mouth in an imbecilic scowl. "'Yew bitter shet up! Yew bitter shet up!"

Katie giggled and Billy's mouth began to quiver at one side. Katie quickly pulled herself up on the high back of the front seat. "Ma--muh! Make Keith leave Billy alone."

"Keith."

Keith leaned over and hissed in Katie's ear, "Tattle-tale, go to jail, hang your britches on a nail."

"You better--be quiet."

Billy began laboriously to count a herd of animals so far away he couldn't see what they were. Katie stared out of her window at a negro walking behind a mule-drawn plow, his feet sinking in the loosened sand. A flock of big white birds littered the air and ground behind him, and sometimes almost brushed his straw hat.

"Ma--muh, what--"

"Aw, Billy, you dope, horses don't count. Do they, Daddy? Horses don't count in cow poker, do they?"

"Keith," said their mother in her mild weary voice, "what has gotten into you today? Why can't you leave your brother alone? A big boy like you, too! I declare, I'm going to be a nervous wreck by the time we get to the beach."

"Stupid!" Keith whispered to Billy, who whirled violently and planted his open hand on Keith's nose. Keith howled dramatically.

"Keith Thomas Ward!" roared their father who had been hunched in silence over the steering wheel. "Do you want me to stop this car right now? Do you? How about y'all, too, Billy and Kathryn?"

Katie cast a look of condemnation at her elder brother.

"I didn't tattle!" he protested anxiously. "I didn't!"

Their mother turned around and addressed them in a stage whisper. "Children, your father is getting quite fed up. If you don't behave soon, he's going to stop the car and it will be you and him all over. Do you hear me?"

The three lapsed into a brooding silence, and Katie and Billy once more searched the landscape for cattle. It was so flat here, not like the rolling hills where they lived. The world looked bigger here, the tobacco fields and pasture-land stretching far away to thin lines of woods on the horizon. Here and there Katie saw frame farmhouses in little oases of trees and old cars, dotting the flat terrain. Some of them were so far away and remote-looking she could not imagine that people really lived in them.

Often they passed some odd tobacco barns. They looked a lot like the tobacco barns up home, log-and-mud walls covered with sloping tin roofs. Only these were connected together in pairs by a long breeze-way-like structure. She was going to ask about them but Keith started up again in a low shout.

"Look, Billy, look at the niggers out picking the cigarettes!"

"Keith!" Their mother's voice froze them all. She had heard; despite the deep wide space between the seats and the roar of the big old car, she had heard. She turned around with a hurt, indignant expression.

"Don't let me ever hear you use that word again. What have I told you about that word?"

Katie saw her brother's ears turn so red they looked as if they didn't belong to the rest of his head, as if they had been made of another material and stuck on afterwards.

"I'm sorry, but all the kids at school use it and I can't help--"

"I don't care what the kids at school do! Just because other people don't raise their children up with manners doesn't mean mine can go around talking like poor white trash. I'm shocked, Keith Thomas, I'm shocked and disappointed. They are 'darkies' or 'colored people.' Never, never use that word!"

Keith slumped back in the seat and stared at his knees in shame. He carefully avoided Katie's eyes, and out of sympathy she turned to the window again.

The silence settled once more, like dust after a whirlwind, and the younger children again scanned the countryside for cows. Soon Katie began to have a hard time keeping her eyes on the fields. She kept sticking to one object and having to turn her head to hold on to it; it started to irritate her. Her gaze was drawn closer and closer to the car, where things moved by so fast that her eyes didn't try to keep up with them. Finally she was staring fixedly at the

white lines that whizzed past on the road beneath her window. They looked so short until they were right under her then they flashed out long and white for a split second and shrunk again. They still didn't look as long as they really were, when you were out of the car and standing on them. She watched them dash by, occasionally joined by a yellow line. If she looked at them just right, she could make it seem as if they curved around, as if the car were moving in a large dizzying circle like a merry-go-round. She narrowed her eyes and the world around the lines blackened and disappeared except for faint crawling colors. The wheels clacked rhythmically as they rolled over the joints in the cement road, and the car rocked her gently back and forth. The white lines themselves were beginning to disappear when suddenly her brother's voice shattered the spell.

"All your cows are dead! All your cows are dead, Katie!" She straightened up, her back tingling uncomfortably. Close to the road was a little hill rising abruptly out of a level field, the only elevation in the scene. A white picket fence circled the foot of the hill and the roots of a big tree pinched its top. Up and down the sides, leaning at crazy angles, some of them broken, were about two dozen tombstones.

"Ma--muh, is it fair when there's not as many graves as you've got cows? Huh, Mama?"

Keith pounced on her right away. "Of course, dopey, there's 'most always more cows than graves! Besides, even if it's only one grave, it's still a graveyard, in' it?"

"Well, why don't you keep your nose out of it, anyway? Billy's the one who's supposed to see it."

Katie went back to watching her side, but she kept an eye on Billy's to catch any graveyards on it. She knew she didn't really need to--Keith would see it if nobody else did.

Another little hill of graves, not much different from the other one, appeared on her side. She glanced furtively at her brothers, then she remembered that she had no cows left to kill. She stared at the graveyard until it passed out of sight behind the car, then she hooked her chin over the back of the front seat.

"Ma--muh, Ma--muh, hey, Mama!"

"What now, Katie?"

"Mama, what are those little graveyards for, out away from everything?"

Her father intercepted the question just as her mother drew in a weary breath to answer: "They're family plots, Kathryn, on people's own land. Now stop whining, for heaven's sake!"

Before he finished, yet another one came into view, only this one didn't have a tree. Why were they all on her side?

She pulled herself up on the front seat once more. "Ma--muh, how do--"

"Will you stop that whining!" Her father's hand came down hard on the dashboard.

"But I wasn't whining, I just wanted to know--"

"You heard your father, Katie--hush up that whining right in his ear. You're making him nervous."

Katie dropped back in her seat, pouting at the backs of her parents' heads. "I wasn't whining," she muttered to no one, in a rebellious but low voice. "I just wanted to know how they make those little hills for the graveyards."

Keith heard her and eagerly thrust the desired information upon her: "I know, Katie! I know--they do it with a bulldozer!"

"No, they don't," she retorted with disgust. "They do not either, Keith!"

"Yes, they do--why not? They scrape up a bunch of dirt from a field--"



and then they plant a tree on it to hold it!" At this last touch his voice took on a triumphant note.

But Katie wasn't about to accept it. "Aw, Keith, you're just making that up out of your head. They can't--you just don't use bulldozers on graveyards!"

"Yes, they do, why not? How else do you reckon they do it?"

She frowned thoughtfully for a second, then turned to the window.

"I don't know . . . it just don't seem right somehow, making a graveyard with a bulldozer."

The idea bothered her and she began to think hard of a way out of it. Finally it occurred to her that the graveyards were probably pretty old, older than Grand-mama, even; and hadn't Mama told her that there weren't any cars when Grand-mama was born? If there weren't any cars, there couldn't have been any bulldozers; surely cars had come before bulldozers.

She turned to present Keith with her argument, but she stopped when she saw Billy looking at her anxiously and flapping his hand behind Keith's back. She leaned over and he whispered in her ear. Then she timidly tapped her father's shoulder.

"Daddy, how about let's stop to go to the bathroom?"

"Yeah," said Keith, "and let's get a Coke. And do I have to sit on the hump after we stop? It's Billy's turn. Huh, Mama?"

The clacking of the wheels grew farther and farther apart, and Katie saw a big round sign stuck on a pole next to the road. Below it squatted a dingy grey building covered with Coke signs and torn up posters. When the turn signal began clicking, Katie's mother said, "Honey, do you think we ought to stop there? It doesn't look very clean to me. I'm not even sure it has rest-rooms, are you?"

"Yeah, there's a sign," Katie's father said. "It'll be okay. Besides, we need gas and there might not be any other place anytime soon."

The car turned into the station and they had to wait a minute until a pick-up truck got away from the pump. Katie's ears had that strange sensation they always had on long trips, when the cars stopped and her parents' voices took on a weird, flat quality after the noise cut down. They rolled up to the pump and Keith opened Billy's door.

"Now don't sit on the toilet seats," their mother warned. "You might catch the polio. If you have to sit down, put toilet paper on it, you hear?"

The children jumped out of the car and ran toward the building. The pavement burned their feet and they leaped like rabbits trying to keep off it.

"I got first!" Keith squealed. Katie saw Billy stop with his legs together, and his face beginning to pucker.

"Let Billy go first, Keith. He's really got to go. I mean really."

Keith started to protest; then he looked from Billy to Katie and waved his arms with resignation and disgust. "Ah, go on. I don't have to, anyway. I'm going to get a Coke!"

"Get us one too!" Katie yelled as Keith ran back toward the car.

Katie had to go around to the other side of the building to get to the ladies' room. Two men were leaning up against the front wall in wooden chairs, and grinned at her as she passed them. She tried not to look at them; they were skinny and sunburned and one of them, whose mouth went in as if he didn't have any teeth, had something brown dribbled down his chin. She hated men like them. She never knew whether she was supposed to feel sorry for them and be nice to them, or be afraid of them.

When she came out of the restroom, Billy was standing in front of the door with a Coke bottle up-turned in his mouth. He saw her and swallowed a huge



mouthful, his head dipping up and down like some big bird. When he could speak he said "Mama's got yours in the car."

They started back toward the car, jumping from shadow to shadow; then they heard Keith calling them. At first they couldn't tell where he was, and they stood squeezed together in the shadow of the pump, looking for him.

"He's around back," Katie said and pushed Billy that way.

"Don't step on any glass!" their mother shouted from the car. Their father was still talking to the gas man.

At the back of the building, beyond all the rusty oil cans and trash, they saw Keith standing with one hand on his hip and the other jiggling his Coke bottle.

"'Bout time," he said scornfully. "That's all you little kids can do is pee."

"You think you're so big, don't you?" Katie sneered. "Just because you're eleven and I'm eight. I can read almost as good as you--"

"Oh, shut up and look," he gestured non-chalantly with his bottle, and Katie and Billy giggled when some of the Coke squirted out and hit the ground.

They tried to see what he was showing them. The service-station was surrounded on three sides by a big cornfield, and at first Katie stared into the rows of motionless stalks turning brown in the August sun. Then she realized he was pointing to the barbed-wire fence that enclosed the field: hanging from the top wire were three shapeless black objects. Katie and Billy moved closer to get a better look. They saw three masses of oily black feathers; one dangled an up-side-down head with a yellow beak and holes instead of eyes, and one seemed to be nothing but two claws coming out of a sticky ball of fuzz. The third one seemed to be moving, almost breathing between two hanging wings. Then a cloud of flies rose up from it and Katie saw pink-grey flesh striped with white. A puff of hot wind blew a horrible stench in her face and she started back, pulling Billy with her. Her throat constricted and she stuck her wrist in her mouth to keep from gagging.

"They're crows," said Keith quite matter-of-factly. "I saw some like them on my Scout trip. The farmers shoot them and hang them up to scare the other crows away from the corn. Neat, huh?"

Katie became aware of a strange sound, a kind of low hum like a distant motor. It was a few seconds before she realized it came from Billy. The hum grew into a gurgling moan and then opened into a full, loud wail.

"Gosh, Billy, what's the matter with you? Keith gaped at him with a look of fear and astonishment.

All at once Billy threw his Coke bottle down with both hands and went howling back toward the car.

"What's wrong with him? He threw away his Coke!" Katie answered Keith with a damning frown, than turned her back on him and followed Billy to the car. Billy was already in when she got there, his face buried in the seat and his rear end up, looking like a Moslem at prayer. Their father had just squeezed in under the steering wheel.

"What's the matter with Billy? Did you do something to him, Keith?"

"He spilt his Coke," Katie said, taking hers from her mother. "You can have some of mine, Billy. I don't want it all."

Billy shook his head violently. Keith got in quietly behind Katie and shut the door. Katie glared at him; his ears were red again and his bottom lip looked big and wobbly.

"Come on, Billy," she said in a protective tone. "You can sit by the window. Sit up, now."

Billy fell over on his side and pushed and struggled with his feet until he was sitting in the corner between the seat and the door. There he sat snivelling and hiccupping, his eyes fixed on his dirty feet, as the car pulled out on the road again.

"Hey, Billy," Katie began once more. "Know what? You won, Billy. When the car stops, that's the end, and I didn't have any cows and you had a whole bunch. You hear that, Bill? You won."

"I wo-on?" Billy hicced in the middle of it. "I won. I won."

He almost smiled at her; then his face crumpled and he began whimpering again.

Keith spoke up in a low shaky voice. "They don't really, Billy. I just made that up. They just hang up ones they find already dead."

Katie silenced him with another look. She put her arm around Billy and gazed out his window, sucking on her Coke. He stopped crying soon. Nobody said anything for a long time, so long that their father said, "Did y'all fall out the window? Mighty quiet back there."

Finally Katie allowed her eyes to wander over to Keith's side of the car. He was staring out the window, his right elbow on the arm rest and his chin in his hand. He had finished his drink and his left hand was picking at the arm rest, pulling little threads out of a torn place in the upholstery. Katie watched with horror as a tear gathered on his bottom lid and rolled toward his chin. As he bent his neck to wipe it off on his shoulder, he saw her looking at him. He jerked his head back to the window, his ears flaming.

"Keith," she said. "Keith! I bet you can't guess where my bottle came from."

ON MY FIRST TRIP TO MISSISSIPPI  
(to my mother)

Here I am in Mississippi,

Where my mama fought with her  
eight year old fists  
and learned with tears that feminine  
fragility was a luxury enjoyed by  
white blossom belles of the south  
(after they had stoned her down  
Lynch St. and down Rose St. and  
all the way to her porch, softly of course,  
and with lady-like refinement).

Here I am in Mississippi,

Where my grandma stood in her doorway,  
bones grinding in her cheeks,  
while she offered to blow the heads  
off those little white knots of hatred  
who called themselves children, who  
screamed "nigger," in chorus, and who  
didn't believe she'd pull the trigger even if  
they had touched my mama.

Here I am in Mississippi,

Where it is only natural  
that I would feel the years grab me  
and pull my sense of belonging  
back to the dust my grandma  
squeezed between her toes and  
brushed out of my mama's hair.

Here I am in Jackson, Mississippi,

That my grandpa felt he had to leave,  
had to save his family, had to  
take his children North,  
(where my mama was once again chased  
and once again turned and fought).

Well, here I am--in Mississippi.

Who ever said I hadn't been here before?  
I been here before  
and it's good to be back.

In this sketch, I would like to share with you something of myself. Not all of my personal story, but the portion that relates to the struggle to free the creative flow of energy in myself. When that energy is dammed up, it keeps me from being alive and awake to what's around me each day. It keeps me from imagining things beyond the habits and patterns of the past. Most of us grew up without clear directives from parents to be a creative person. The directives given me in childhood were often at cross purposes; the role for women modeled quite different from the one I chose; the experiences allowed were the more protected ones typical of the limitations placed on girls.

My story isn't just for women, it's for men who love women, too, and who want to understand the confusion and anger they sometimes receive from them.

But mainly it's my story. It is important for me in loosening the creative flow in myself to share with others a more real and basic picture of myself. I find I grow from being more transparent to the people I value and from inviting a greater transparency from them.

My parents are, of course, central to what I will say here. Both are interesting, intelligent people. Any of you meeting them would like them. Both grew up in a small midwestern farming town. My father struggled out of a financially poor past to get an education and become a very successful research engineer with a large corporation. My mother, from the same small town, was raised in a more educated and cultured family that had a good deal of social consciousness. She inherited all these things despite her choice to live out a traditional role of mother and housewife. But she also continually "dabbles" in the arts. Her work in pottery, sculpture, stained glass windows, shows an exceptional talent. Both parents passed on to me a strong love and awe of nature.

In telling the story of my struggle to create, I'm focusing on the most negative messages they gave me. These messages represent their unconscious connection with the legacy of confusion about being a woman person that stretches back centuries in the corseted past of human feelings. Through them came the ambivalence of the wider culture, expressed in small incidental moments in childhood.

I was eight. It was my parents' anniversary. They, along with my older brother and sister and I, were sitting at a table in a fancy restaurant, one where my father had to put on the tie that was in his pocket, just in case. After the meal a woman came to our table to express effusively how moved she was by what she called our handsome and well mannered family. She had never seen a more enviable family. My mother was overjoyed and to this day recalls the scene with pride.

I remember watching the woman's face with a kind of wonder. I didn't like my sky blue dress with scalloped white borders; the sleeves were too tight and my feet, in the adult chair, hardly touched the floor. It may have been my first real sense of the pressure to be something other than myself. To be on the exterior perfectly in control and smiling: the sugar and spice and everything nice of a girl's childhood.

Looking back, I can put those feelings into words. Should I be this polite cheerful person, so pretty in a sky blue dress? Will they like me with rough edges, the loose threads that always seem to hang out of me, forming a



more fanciful pattern, as seemingly random as the flight of a bird? Can they take my anger, my sexy feelings, my mistakes, my unleashed exuberance? I think, in that moment, eight years old, sitting in that restaurant, I felt a little tug of rebellion inside, along with a certain shame for it. Outwardly in many ways I complied.

As I grew older, Mother said I was quite special because I was so level headed. I rarely responded to fads. But what was the price? I always had mixed feelings when she said that.

My parents were older when I was born. They welcomed me a bit too eagerly, having waited through the depression to start their family. My mother turned the whole of her vast creative energy toward us, her children, in our early years. We were over-protected. She was imaginative in raising us, encouraging us in artistic forms of expression, my father in asking scientific questions about nature; but we were rarely left alone. The one time my parents left for a vacation alone together I was already eleven. My mother never respected closed doors.

At nineteen, I proposed a trip to Europe, to travel and study with a friend. We planned to travel as the mood struck us. My parents said no. I went anyway, and was aware of the genuine shift in myself, in demanding a right to wider experience, despite the danger. Women are so often protected from the dangerous in life, from the risks. But danger and risks are always a part of exploring the unknown. With narrowed experiences we often come to distrust the new, the different, and to fear the consequences. We also miss the chance to know that special feeling of pride in mastering the difficult, and dealing with the inevitable failures. In my case, it led to feelings of helplessness, dependency, and a lowered sense of self esteem.

Another childhood scene. I'm ten; we're in the basement of a relative's home. It's Thanksgiving Day, and we've just finished the usual overly abundant meal. We are getting ready to play a ping pong game. My father pulls me aside and says, "Honey, you're going to play the boys now. Play well enough to keep them interested, but don't win too many." That message was often repeated, in jest; it punctuated my childhood years. Reinforced by the society around me, it took on a deadly serious ring.

I responded to the immediate situation of ping pong by being embarrassingly terrible at the game, and deciding later, defensively, that I didn't like it anyway.

Again, now, I can put into words the vague confusion and anger I felt at the time. What's wrong with my talents and skills? Are they dangerous? Won't men love me? What kind of a game of hide and go seek is loving?

In sixth grade, along with the boys, I made a folder of the career I wanted to pursue. I thought they were serious in letting the girls do it too. I didn't realize that at adolescence, along with the other girls, I would be asked to give up that dream. I wanted to be a physicist. My father supported the idea. He got a most creative physicist friend to work with me on a physics project, and take me through the physics lab, explaining the work he was doing. It was exciting. My parents were proud of my grades.

When I reached college, things seemed to change. My exuberant sharing of philosophy at the dinner table was met with a knowing glance. The men I brought home created far more stir and controversy. My father encouraged me to take an education degree so if my husband died, I would have something to fall back on.

A scene when I'm twenty, discussing with my mother my decision to go to Unitarian Theological School. My mother, despite her usual understanding,

is almost in tears. She develops that furrowed brow, the worried look, that I know hooks something deep in herself. I remind her, she says, of her friend Mildred. Mildred went to school. Mildred never married. I did go to graduate school, pursuing what I felt I needed to pursue. But I wondered. I feared. I doubted at times. I liked men. I liked love. I needed to find myself.

When finally I married, I think it was a great relief to my parents, although they were somewhat baffled by the unconventional person I chose. At that time, it looked as though we might not follow the ordinary life. He had ambitions to write, a not very solid financial prospect, and he might pursue a Ph.D. But I was married. My going for a Ph.D. wasn't as uncomfortable in that context.

Yet despite that seeming acceptance, as recently as four years ago my mother wrote in a letter, "How proud we are to have two professors in the family, Bill and Bob." Then she added in parentheses, "Oh yes, Jane, three, I forgot you."

One last incident has to do with my sister, who has just come to have the courage to speak of herself as an artist as well as a wife and mother. She is beginning to establish a promising art career in the city where she lives. But her husband has been thinking of changing jobs, which would require a move. In one week my mother sent my sister two clippings. One contained a quote from Emerson that reads, "A work of art has as much right to exist as the day or the night." The second portrays a man who has just changed jobs lavishly praising his wife for her quiet endurance in taking all the responsibility of packing up their possessions and organizing the children to move from a city and life she treasures.

Ann sent me both clippings, knowing I would share her anger and amusement. Both of us have inherited from our parents a deep ambivalence about pursuing our talents versus our relationships with the men we love and children.

Ironically, now I'm becoming less in need of outside esteem, my parents are developing a pride in what I do and who I am. Perhaps changing my own feelings to ones of acceptance of myself, I am more able to hear their real acceptance, the other side of their ambivalence.

I know, too, that the parents I speak of in this paper are as much the parents I have internalized as they are themselves. My "inside" parents don't always match the real people who have grown and changed, and are, in fact, very complicated. Still, problems are handed down generation after generation to be chipped at and reworked to a better solution. My father and my mother passed on to my sister and myself an ambivalence about what it is to be a woman that is much like a two faced creature tearing itself to destruction by pulling in opposite directions, expending energy only to remain in the same place. It is up to Ann and me to reduce the ambivalence and help free the flow of energy in ourselves that will make us truly creative and alive, in spite of the ambivalent messages from girlchildhood.

AMBIVALENCE

The loft is mine.  
You're in my bed,  
crowding me out  
with your hot body  
filling all the space,  
choking out my peace.

Why did I ever  
let you past  
the boundary  
of clothes,  
that invisible shield?

So here I am  
naked as a child  
stark awake listening  
to your dreams.

A warm hand  
sleepy, unaware  
of violated space,  
tender,  
flesh on flesh,  
follows the curve of my back,  
then heavy breathing  
asleep.

What in me sees  
your moonlit silhouette  
of angular face  
on my pillow  
and moves  
warm, flowing  
toward you?  
You are, damn you,  
a terrible joy.





L A U R A   D O N A L D S O N :   W O M A N , B O D Y , F R E E D O M : P r o b l e m   a n d   P o s s i -  
b i l i t y   i n   R a d i c a l   D e n i a l   a n d   R a d i c a l   C o n s e n t

Since the dawn of human consciousness, humanity has struggled with the problem of freedom and finitude. How can we freely exist when we simultaneously inhabit a body subject to all of the exigencies of life? Although the task of relating the body to realization of one's fullest potential remains a universal one, it entails particular difficulties for women: through pregnancy and muscular weakness (whose origin may be cultural), the female body functions endemically to prevent women from manifesting the total spectrum of their possibilities. This essay will address the problem of women, body, and freedom by "unpacking" two different dialectics of voluntary and involuntary. First, I will analyze the dynamic of radical denial of the body as evidenced in certain theologies of virginity, and second, that of radical acceptance of the body as evidenced in philosophers such as Paul Ricoeur and Michael Polanyi. Lest the reader misconstrue its intent, however, I would like to emphasize that this essay does not endeavor to historically evaluate or reconstruct the ethics of celibacy, nor deal with the phenomenological method utilized by Ricoeur and Polanyi. Rather, it attempts to provide a comparative means for understanding and grasping the problem of self, body, and freedom. By contrasting radical denial with radical consent, I would hope that its readers might attain a more profound insight into the relationship of their own bodies to freedom, and thereby participate more richly and completely in human being. To this end, let us now turn to the first position: the radical denial of the body which underlies much of the early theology of virginity.

As early as St. Paul, one perceives the advocacy of virginity as an integral means through which to enhance spiritual perfection. However, this emphasis upon virginity immediately involves an agonizing dilemma for the relation of freedom to the female body: when the apocalyptic dualism of historical crisis translates itself into the Greek philosophical dualism of body and soul,<sup>1</sup> it concomitantly incorporates into its structure the dualism of male and female. Just as "bodily" earth now becomes subordinate to "spiritual" heaven, so "bodily" woman becomes subordinate to "spiritual" man. This analogy becomes even further solidified through the Eve myth and the universal imputation to women of responsibility for humanity's subsequent disfigurement. In "Misogyny and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," Rosemary Ruether astutely comments upon this process:

The definition of femaleness as body decrees a natural subordination of female to male, as flesh must be subject to spirit in the right ordering of nature (Augustine). It also makes her peculiarly the symbol of the Fall and since sin is defined as the disordering of the original justice wherein the bodily principle revolts against its ruling spirit and draws reason down to its lower dictates.<sup>2</sup>

Metamorphosing from that which mirrors the goodness and love of God's creation to that which threatens the male-spirit, woman as body and body as woman becomes essentially demonic. Tertullian shrilly proclaims this demonization when he declares: "You are the Devil's gateway. You are the unsealer of that forbidden tree. ... You so easily destroyed God's image man. On account of your desert, that is death, even the Son of God had to die."<sup>3</sup>

The simultaneous assimilation of sexual dimensions into patristic body-soul dualism also operates in transforming the soteriological process itself. Incorporating this extremely negative view of the body, salvation now requires the total repudiation of somatic life for the spiritual state of the virgin.<sup>4</sup> This

rejection involves embracing an ethic which seeks to live upon earth "the angelic life," "as though not in the body." Although living "as though not in the body" certainly necessitates a much greater withdrawal from the processes of life than a mere abstention from sexual intercourse, the narrower categories of sex and procreation become symbols for the corruption which draws humanity away from God. "Redemption demands the flight from corruptibility, symbolized by procreation, to the immutable realm, symbolized by virginity."<sup>5</sup> That anti-sexuality and not the marital state per se determine the thrust of the celibate ethic emerges from published exhortations directed toward married priests and bishops, urging them to practice "the way of perfection," i.e. chaste marriage.<sup>6</sup> Thus, redemption radically severs itself from embodied existence, and demands that aspiring Christians totally alienate themselves from the personal experience of their own bodies, especially their own sexuality.

Exerting a profound influence for the past 1500 years, this dualistic scheme of salvation has largely circumscribed the manner in which women have perceived the problem of freedom and the body. In the redemptive dichotomies espoused by such theologians as Augustine and Jerome, woman's synonymity with the body and carnality imbues her with the "natural" inferiorities of sensuality, maliciousness, pettiness, and weakness. Man, on the other hand, possesses by nature the salvational virtues of chastity, wisdom, justice, and patience. Thus, Christian salvation exacts from women an ontological denial of their bodies, and indeed, of their very being:

You must act against nature or rather above nature if you are to forswear your natural functions, to cut off your own root, to cull no fruit but that of virginity, to abjure the marriage bed, to shun intercourse with men and, while in the body, to live as though out of it.<sup>7</sup>

The salvation of women requires a physical and mental negation of her fundamental essence, an assumption of the "male" salvational attitude, and a transformation into an unnatural virility which directly contravenes her nature. While participating in the process of redemption, woman gains her freedom only in the absolute decapitation of psyche from soma, and the cosmic obliteration of her psychobiological existence.

This element of feminine abasement surfaces even in the most "modern" and enlightened attempts to deal with the issue of virginity. In Chastity, Sexuality & Personal Hangups, Father Joseph D. Wade, S.J., directs toward women celibates the admonition that genital sensations may be permitted but not promoted. Connoting a neutral attitude toward the body, "permitting" in this sense implies a passive acceptance of the physiological reaction rather than an affirmative acceptance of one's sexuality. Although perhaps not as virulent as patristic theology, a neutral attitude of women towards their bodies engenders the same denial of embodied existence: the self-disregard ensuing from an apathetic relation of self to body ultimately prevents an experience of integrated, wholistic freedom. This element discloses itself particularly in Wade's discussion of the way in which the celibate woman must deal with the attractions arising from interpersonal relationships. When sexual feelings emerge within relationships to an "other," Father Wade suggests that she only permit the sensations, and endeavor to ignore them as completely as possible. Further, when the feelings become too strong to ignore, she must then sever the relationship entirely. Paralleling the church fathers, this modern paradigm for the virginal self in relation to her body advocates a view of alienation: she must render her body invisible by ignorant apathy, or--if that fails--dissociate herself from it totally. An apparent neutrality only restates in more moderate language the same patristic refusal to allow the body any positive role in attaining freedom and redemption.



Further, the concept of the virgin as spiritual mother indivisibly fuses the ontological definition of "woman" with these alienated views of her bodily existence. Dominating the celibate ethic since the fourth century, spiritual motherhood--regardless of the physical capacity to bear children--asserts itself as the true vocation of all women.<sup>8</sup> However, it is a maternity which denies women the freedom of realize themselves as autonomous persons. On the one hand, the virgin becomes a mother by subjugating her body totally to the spirit; on the other hand, actual women participate in motherhood by subjugating their spirits totally to the body. The past and present stance of the Catholic Church against birth control and abortion corroborates the latter dynamic: contradistinct from men, women who elect non-virginal existence must remain servile to their biological nature and cannot divorce themselves in any way from its exigencies. In both these contexts of virginal or non-virginal life, the body assumes a relationship to the self as slave and master, respectively, and consequently would seem to preclude an integrative and wholistic freedom for women. Gabriel Marcel asserts with profound insight that the relation of self to body establishes the paradigm for all relationships.<sup>9</sup> A kernel of one's experience of the body germinates within every relational dialectic on a subrational and instinctive level. Thus, as long as woman perceives her body as either master or slave, she will find it impossible to form associations whose motivations toward the "other" include equality, justice and autonomy. At this point, the double tragedy of linking freedom with denial of the body appears: it not only denies women access to themselves as whole and undivided humans; it also prevents them from conceiving others as whole and undivided.

Even the positive aspects of virginity, i.e. the new metaphor of the spiritual woman and the possibility of an alternative lifestyle unrelated to a biological family, become extremely problematic in light of our previous explanation of how self and body interrelate in its freedom. Because of celibacy's predication upon a radical dualism which severs woman-body from man-spirit, women become resurrected equals with men only through abasement of their bodies and their innermost being.

Thus the potential of the female ascetic movement to express the liberation of women within the framework of classical religion was largely repressed in Christianity through the very dualism in which the liberation of the spiritual principle from the body was perceived. At each point the women found femininity equated with bodiliness to re-subordinate her, even as an ascetic, to the right of the stronger, now interpreted spiritually as the right of the male to monopolize intellectual power and identify it with masculinity.<sup>10</sup>

Extrapolating this observation to a more general conceptual structure, one might postulate that a true freedom of autonomy, equality, and wholeness only actualizes itself when a woman dwells in herself autonomously, equally, and wholly. A virginal existence whose central thrust is the negation of sexuality in its most inclusive sense does not present the possibility for this actualization. As long as freedom validates only part of the human agent, it remains a partial and inauthentic freedom. However, if radical denial of the body does not lead women to freedom, does radical acceptance contain any more potential in terms of liberation? To answer this question, we must now examine acceptance of the involuntary, i.e. the body, and its ramifications for the freedom of women.

The trouble is all in the knob at the top of our bodies. I'm not against the body or the head either: only the neck, which creates the illusion that they are separate. The language is wrong, it shouldn't have different words for them. If the head extended directly into the shoulders like a worm's or a frog's without that constriction, that lie,

they wouldn't be able to look down at their bodies, and move them around as if they were robots or puppets; they would have to realize that if the head is detached from the body, both of them will die.<sup>11</sup>

In this passage from her fascinating novel Surfacing, Margaret Atwood elucidates the primary ground of human existence: our being-in-the-world irrevocably and inescapably embeds itself in the totality of our bodies. Indwelling and relying upon the body, we are involved in a reciprocal relationship which furnishes the core of being in the human mode. Our participation in each moment of perception and feeling, each moment of conscious reality, depends upon the body's collation of, and complex response to, the impinging forces of the world around us. For example, the act of perception necessitates the physiological positioning of the eyes on the object, and the autonomic interpretation of dozens of clues in the eyes, muscles and neural pathways of the brain.<sup>12</sup> This interpretive integration of the body underlies and forms our self-conscious experience of perception, thus demonstrating the complete insinuation of the body into human activity. In his essay, "The Logic of Tacit Inference," Michael Polanyi asserts that one can further generalize this dynamic of self and body in the act of perception to include the bodily roots of all knowledge and thought.<sup>13</sup> We grasp present reality only through the medium of the body. Both Polanyi and the French philosopher Paul Ricoeur deny the possibility of severing the body from consciousness, for it functions as the condition without which that consciousness would never actualize itself in human life. Perhaps this will become clearer if we analyze a distinctly human capacity, language, in relation to body, self, and freedom.

In virtue of its quality as physical sound, speech is the mediation of body and mind, of involuntary and voluntary. Speech grants freedom yet rivets it to the finitude of bodily existence in the world. Speech is a physical, organic act by means of which a person escapes the limits of the physical and is able to create a distinctively human world, a world whose law is freedom rather than necessity, yet a world that exists in profound reciprocity with the world of physical necessity.<sup>14</sup>

Speech establishes the paradigm for the symbiotic relationship of body to self, and additionally reveals one of the most fundamental facets of human freedom--its created, embodied nature. Paul Ricoeur, in Freedom and Nature, defines this freedom as infinite possibility tied to a constitutive particularity, an infinite finite, a capacity for being and a way of being given.<sup>15</sup> Although the limits of the body set the perimeter, this freedom remains authentic in spite of its involuntary contingency. However, the authenticity of finite freedom requires a further analysis in terms of its dynamics. One finds precisely this justification in the structure of human consent.

Consent constitutes an active adoption of the necessity of the body. Linking necessity with the freedom which embraces it, consent internalizes, assumes, and transforms the objective reality.<sup>16</sup> Willing the fact of the involuntary, one changes it for oneself since there exists no possibility of changing it in itself. "Consent is specifically willing without being able, a powerless effort, but one which converts its powerlessness into a new grandeur."<sup>17</sup> In the act of consent, one reconciles voluntary and involuntary in a paradoxical movement: the naturalizing of freedom and the interiorizing of nature.<sup>18</sup> To illustrate this reconciliation in terms of the specific problem of woman, body, and freedom, I would describe it in this manner. The body, i.e. the involuntary, confronts the conscious totality of woman, i.e. the voluntary, and the sheer force of its uncontrollable functions seems to totally preclude a relationship between them. However, through an act of will and personal agency, the woman recognizes the unalterable embodiedness of her situation, and consents that she cannot change it.



As a woman I organically relate to the world with the body of a female. I menstruate. I can choose whether or not and when to have children, but nothing will prevent the menstruation process or menopause, and I must deal with the potential fertility of my body.<sup>19</sup>

In this passage, Penelope Washbourn understands her body as the womb which literally nourishes her cognitive aspects. Accomplishing the reconciliation of voluntary self and involuntary body by viewing each as inseparably dependent upon the other, woman appropriates this necessity as a fundamental part of her existence. Thus, she affirms with Paul Ricoeur that consent is the right love of the self and being in the self.

This reconciliation bequeaths to its consequent freedom an underlying tension: there exists no systematic or harmonious relation of freedom to nature, "...but always a paradoxical, precarious synthesis of intentional structures which support free will and the idea of nature understood as this infinite freedom's way of being finite."<sup>20</sup> Embodied freedom expresses this precarious synthesis through an active and passive character which signifies more a mode of being than a factual entity. Crystallizing around acceptance of values, reliance on the absolute, and recognition of the givenness of nature,<sup>21</sup> authentic freedom both passively receives and actively shapes these elements. Although not obliterating the tension inherent within consent, freedom does incorporate and transcend it. Thus, woman experiences her body as a force which imposes its arbitrary functions upon her. Yet in the very act of experiencing and consenting to these forces, she imbues them with her own shape and meaning. Through this dialectic, the freedom of woman to realize her full potential as a human predicates itself upon her ability to live through and transform her existence in this way. The freedom of radical acceptance, then, not only assumes a material density in the body, it also demands a constant attending to the fragility of its nature, and a willingness to profoundly experience the ambiguity of its reconciliation.

However, how does woman's freedom through radical consent to her body relate to the previous view of radical denial? First of all, it criticizes denial for its false anthropology of freedom. Ricoeur posits that:

The relation of mediation between freedom and nature is more fundamental than the relation of opposition. Every other answer to the question of the relation between them deals only with a truncated freedom which exhausts itself in denying an inert nature.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, a theological system of virginity which validates the voluntary to the exclusion of the involuntary presents a distorted caricature of the human agent. Because it compels women to adopt their cognitive-voluntary functions at the expense of their somatic-involuntary, the radical negation of virginity presents a false picture of human activity. Initially entombing the body in a corpse-like state, this view gradually disfigures the face of nature with a mask of death.

A second consideration of the relation of radical acceptance to radical denial is much more ironic and profound: even though it apparently repudiates the participation of denial in the process of freedom, radical acceptance presupposes and relies upon that denial for its authenticity. Freedom must first divorce itself from necessity by saying "No!" before its "Yes!" can assume any meaning. Without first working through negation of the involuntary, acceptance of the voluntary becomes mere determinism. Or, without the possibility of complete separation from the body, woman's acceptance of it becomes mere conservatism which subjects her to sexual oppression. One must contend that in spite of its negative and destructive effects on the psyches of women, the disembodiedness of virginity forms the precondition for and the validation of the embodiedness of acceptance. A fascinating speculation transposes these individual terms into collective ones. Given

the fact that the theology of virginity represents Christian culture's first and most complete advocacy of bodily denial, does this theology in some sense enable modern thinkers to construct their phenomenologies of consent?

In conclusion, since experiencing the body is by its nature personal, I would like to add some personal remarks.

I have come to the realization that whatever type of cultural values, social roles, or interpretations I place on my body, the body itself does affect my behavior, my action in relation to my world, my fears and my possibilities for the graceful experience of reality. I wish to own my female body and its female sexual structure.<sup>23</sup>

We can never escape the ubiquity of body experience, a fact which has created enormously complex problems for women in their struggle for liberation. Somehow or other, each of us must face and resolve the relationship of our bodies to our selves, and our freedom. Washbourn remarks that in many respects, the ethics of somatic denial operate in much of the current legalistic emphasis on equality. Many women become so concerned to prove their own literal equality in terms of intellect, character and strength (or become so alarmed by the recent reversals on abortion funding or pregnancy benefits) that they disregard or negate the peculiar qualities of their female bodies. "If I can control my sexual weakness, that is, my liability to become pregnant, than I can almost become disassociated from my female body."<sup>24</sup> This does not imply that women should not utilize birth control, or that they need to bear children in order to truly experience their feminine bodies. Rather, it merely warns women against falling into the same body-self dualism that emerged in the phenomenon of virginity. At its most visceral level, freedom for women entails "...opening myself to my own body, being responsible for it, and creating a situation in which its body-based experiences can be trusted."<sup>25</sup>

True liberation--liberation in the body--exists for woman as her most agonizing problem and profound possibility; most terrifying fear and ecstatic joy. When women face the totality of the body's positive and negative potentialities, when they interiorize and transcend them in consent, they will then participate in the authentic intersection of freedom, self, and body. By repossessing their bodies and imparting to them their own individual essences, women can create for themselves a dialectic which develops the most cherished goal of liberation: an embodied and wholistic relationship with oneself and others. Only in this context can women truly begin to experience freedom. The problem of the body gives birth to the possibility of freedom. Our being-in-the-world exists as an immutably embodied conduit for the forces of freedom, and we deny it at the peril of that which makes us human.

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<sup>1</sup>Rosemary Ruether, Liberation Theology (New York: Paulist Press, 1972), p.58.

<sup>2</sup>Rosemary Ruether, "Misogynism and Virginal Feminism in the Fathers of the Church," in Religion and Sexism, ed. Rosemary Ruether (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974), p. 156.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid. <sup>4</sup>Rosemary Ruether, New Woman, New Earth (New York: The Seabury Press, 1975), p. 17.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid. <sup>6</sup>Ruether, Liberation Theology., p. 60.

<sup>7</sup>Ruether, Religion and Sexism, p. 176.

<sup>8</sup>Elizabeth Schussler Fiorenza, "Feminist Theology as a Critical Theology of Liberation," Theological Studies 36 (December 1973): 622.

<sup>9</sup>Gabriel Marcel, "Primary and Secondary Reflection: The Essential Freedom." in Phenomenology and Existentialism, ed. Richard Zaner and Don Ihde (New York: Capricorn Books, 1973), p. 211.

<sup>10</sup>Ruether, Liberation Theology, p. 111.

<sup>11</sup>Margaret Atwood, Surfacing (New York: Popular Library, 1976), p. 91.

<sup>12</sup>Michael Polanyi, Knowing and Being, ed. Marjorie Grene (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969), p. 183.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 147.

<sup>14</sup>Peter Hodgson, New Birth of Freedom (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976), p. 126.

<sup>15</sup>Paul Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature, trans. Erazim V. Kohak (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966), p. 407.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 344. <sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 345.

<sup>18</sup>Paul Ricoeur, Political and Social Essays, ed. David Stewart and Joseph Bien (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1974), p. 38.

<sup>19</sup>Penelope Washbourn, "My Body/My World," in Male and Female, ed. Ruth Tiffany Barnhouse and Urban T. Holmes III (New York: The Seabury Press, 1976), p. 87.

<sup>20</sup>Ricoeur, Freedom and Nature p. 373.

<sup>21</sup>Fanny Edstein, "Beyond Determinism and Irrationalism," Philosophy Today 11 (Spring 1967): 46.

<sup>22</sup>Ricoeur, Political and Social Essays, p. 43.

<sup>23</sup>Washbourn, Male and Female, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 90. <sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

(quotes taken from 1899 cooking notebook of  
Elnora B. Christensen, Mrs. Coty Instructor)

THE BLESSING

"Meat--  
Flesh of animals  
used  
for food:  
lean  
fat,  
gristle,  
bone,  
fibers."  
Beasts Noah buoyed  
through brown waters  
in a stink of floating bloated carrion  
only to come,  
himself,  
to our table.  
The care, the trying,  
manure smells  
and sea-rolling loneliness,  
his flesh, hair,  
blood, gristle,  
and theirs--  
their smell  
and his--  
tossed together on Ararat,  
all flesh, every creeping thing  
in whose nostrils was the breath of life:  
so quick the altar,  
the sweet singed offerings.  
An act of grace-saying  
thinly marks,  
like an olive leaf dragged on wet sand,  
an evolution of desperate divisions.  
In the quiet moment  
before our palate's appeasement,  
a dark knowing of blood  
flows lewd and holy,  
salivary,  
on lips entoning a prayer  
to Noah's knower.



## CHOOSING THE VENISON

"Elk, antelope and deer meat is excellent."  
so far to come  
to scrawl now  
an attitude of pallet or spirit  
toward the large quiet creatures  
of the great darkness--  
an epithet of mind before words,  
like something that was in that beginning  
with the first flickers on the last great ice.

"In good venison  
the fat will be clear and thick."  
running through the meat  
the way the words of the mother  
spread the North Platt  
and the Sweetwater  
in the country to the east.  
She had come from Denmark  
to walk the distance of those mudded rivers  
that shined in her memory  
from before she could make the American words  
for the strange dry country.

"If the meat is stale  
a strong odor will rise  
if a sharp knife  
is pushed into the haunch or shoulder."  
But if the meat is very fresh--  
the blood not let from the throat--  
the nerves will still be alive.  
Her knee on the shoulder;  
her hand on the upturned knife  
worked so sternly  
in the warm wet throat  
past the jerks of distant muscles  
like earth tremors in the great elk  
and spilled the blood in gushes onto the frost  
while the steamy smell of it  
pumped into the air around her  
and she breathed it into her heart.

"A young deer  
has the hoof open but little."  
But little has the young doe sprinted  
from the dogs and the wet stream gullies  
over the rock and hard hills  
to disappear, like a haunt,  
in the stillness of scrub pine or aspen.  
Elnora was not so close and quick  
as once she was,  
the calmness was coming on her like a camouflage  
and she knew the deer-like secrets to be in her--  
unwritten as yet, now as then,  
a half heard breath in the thicket.

NO PERMANENT TRACES

i like to think now of my past as a bloody cocoon  
which hung with the barn owls  
in the trees  
& drip-dried, sent  
me whirling to the ground like a hard rain.

By using my poems as a history tour  
i have named a mother, a weaver by trade  
& a father, who seems to be sometimes a sailor  
or other times a poet from the coast of Italy  
which is why i see waves amongst my dreams.

And while the rain goes on through this morning  
    owls calling softly  
                in the pines on the west rise  
on a telephone some voice tells me  
    Everything Turns to Poems  
    In the End  
& i would agree but my past won't let me;  
we must defer to blood.  
Always, the issue gets changed--  
    on the poem?  
    or the page?

When I was an idea in the arms of the air  
there was nothing i could not have been  
even a butterfly or sparrow  
but in falling, one often becomes one's identity  
and once on the ground  
a tag is put on and so forth:

    your potential not lessened, but hardened  
the seed which looks strongest is watered etc  
& hoped to Become.

Some aspects of the past are trivial  
while others are not  
& for example, that barn owl still calling  
is the one that sits in the barn, our barn,  
through winter. He's a past i enjoy,  
being large, grey & studious in countenance  
though by nature not so bright as, say,  
the pig. He may be the one that i hung near  
when an idea; he seems related.

If it is true that Everything Turns to Poems  
In the End,  
why do we write them?  
To hasten the process?

Three turbulent years ago, some voice on the telephone  
told me      Your Poems are My Savings  
& yesterday a friend said that that voice had  
Become "Just Like You" now  
        well that's oppressive news/ i'm still very young  
        & at best, still learning to Become Myself.  
that voice probably puts yellow slicker-boots  
on her cat when it's raining outside  
which i would never do  
though my goats wear T-shirts in the winter  
        Never mind,  
        no one can prove their own theoretical  
        existence every time

born like rain,  
i will die like rain  
with no permanent traces on the pavement.  
& the poems that i write  
in the end  
will go back  
into trees, if everything is still on schedule  
by then.





I cannot personify death. I can't capitalize it. Thanatos, The Grim Reaper, Mr. Death--these names call forth no image in my mind. I cannot say with any sincerity "Death be not proud"; Donne's sentiment is foreign to me. I do not dream of death in human form, or for that matter in any form. No skulls, no black suits, no white faces, no scythes or flails. I have trouble finding a satisfactory way of thinking about death. Mortality or immortality, life after death or death after life, the end or the continuation--these terms rattle in my brain.

Only as change does death mean anything to me. I know that death is some kind of transition. Something will be different. I shall have to surrender life as I now know it. Change implies time, just as time has no meaning without change.

But if death is change, then I am dying constantly. I change every moment, so I die every moment. Only through an ever-recurring act of faith can I identify the I of the present with the I of the past. Enough attributes remain the same--or seem to--from instant to instant to convince me of my identity with a being who took note of his existence a minute ago: the same address (though it hasn't always been the same); the same friends (except they may have changed in the meantime); the same clothes (though they're getting old); the same name. Yes, the same name. That's how I know that yesterday's Me isn't dead. But that's rather slim evidence. If I were called Mary Jones, I might be less sure that I was still I. And if I had no last name, if I were just called Mary, I might have grave doubts indeed concerning any continuity with the being who called herself Mary yesterday. Before I had a name was I someone else?

Names are flimsy evidence. But what about memory? I remember writing page one an hour ago, so it is I who wrote page one. That's continuity. And yet if I exist in my memory, if I remember Chris Benfey writing page one, if I can envision me, or him . . . he's already another. "Je est un autre," said Rimbaud. I is another.

A passage from Eliot's "The Cocktail Party" remains embedded in my brain. The "unexpected guest" is speaking:

Ah, but we die to each other daily.

What we know of other people

Is only our memory of the moments

During which we knew them. And they have changed since then.

So have we. The passage continues:

To pretend that they and we are the same

Is a useful and convenient social convention

. . . . We must also remember

That at every meeting we are meeting a stranger.

The me I meet in my memory is a stranger. He is dead but I remember him. Paradox. I am different and the same. My past is mine, though I can't retrieve it.

Or can I? *Le temps retrouvé*. Marcel Proust recreating the past, through art. And art does not deny time. It embraces it:

But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,

The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,

The moment in the droughty church at smokefall

Be remembered; involved with past and future.

(Eliot, "Burnt Norton")

Art fixes the past, objectifies it, frees it from subjective ambiguity. I always seem to find myself returning to art. It is the least unsatisfactory solution.

But why do I want to hold onto the past? Because my memory torments me! My past demands interpretation. I cannot forget it. Dreams bring people from the past into my presence, my present. I have to deal with them. I replay incidents that happened years ago. I analyse what I did and didn't do on certain occasions. I attack myself, defend myself, try to learn something from my mistakes and my successes, but mainly my mistakes. Success is easy to forget.

I don't want to hold onto the past. The past holds on to me.

Meanwhile the future is pulling me into itself. Expectations I and others have of myself, goals I have set for myself, vague goals summed up by the word "significance."

But who after all is significant? And is a person any better off if she considers herself significant, or if others think she is significant, or if, as so often happens, she feels significant because others think she is significant?

Randall Jarrell is buried in my backyard. I visit his grave often, and more often still I read his poetry. A woman "past her prime" is speaking. She feels herself getting old:

And yet I'm afraid, as I was at the funeral  
I went to yesterday.  
My friend's cold made-up face, granite among its flowers,  
Her undressed, operated-on, dressed body  
Were my face and body.  
As I think of her I hear her telling me  
  
How young I seem; I am exceptional;  
I think of all I have.  
But really no one is exceptional,  
No one has anything, I'm anybody,  
I stand beside my grave  
Confused with my life, that is commonplace and solitary.

("Next Day")

That last stanza haunts me--"But really no one is exceptional." Why do famous poets say things like that? Why does Camus, the hero of a generation, dissuade his followers from worshipping heroes? What's the secret? The secret, they seem to be saying, is not a secret. Significance is a lie, and a dangerous one, if we depend too much upon it. The great man makes mistakes. The musician goes deaf, the government collapses, the source of inspiration runs dry, the artist dies despite all his immortal trappings.

I wait for the wonderful accident that will change my life. After the accident my future will be certain, decided for me. Everything will make sense in a flash. I will become in a moment a self-less social worker, a convinced revolutionary, a doctor, a cripple, a criminal, a leper, a lover, a dead man, a dead--.

Then I think of Henry James' story, "The Beast in the Jungle." The protagonist is a young man like me. He is convinced that something awful is in store for him. He refuses to accept responsibilities. After all, the terrible thing could happen at any time. He must be prepared. He ignores the present. The future occupies his full attention; a mysterious future, with nothing certain but one thing, the awful thing, the wonderful accident, what he calls "the beast in the jungle." Gradually, horribly, pathetically, he comes to realize that the terrible thing that so obsesses him is his own refusal to live. The beast in the jungle is a life where nothing happens. A powerful story, and one with a clear

moral, and one which I read long ago, and still remember, and still ignore.

O come fair accident, and wake me from my sleep. She doesn't come. Meanwhile I am chiselling slowly at the monument that will prove beyond a reasonable doubt that my life is significant. I write articles, poems, and papers, and sign them all.

I want to be a great man. This I admit without blushing. And, after all, it's not unusual. To wish to be a great man is like masturbation: everybody does it.

Only when I ask myself why I want to be "great" do I become confused. I'm tempted to postpone this question until later, until after I have achieved greatness. Why wait? I suppose the answer has to do with significance. When you're significant, people respect you. So you respect yourself, since thousands of people can't be wrong. And fame only confirms what you suspected all along--that you are exceptional. Or at least you were.

That's the bitter truth in all this. When I am a great man, you will recognize me for what I was, for what I did, and not for what I am. It's time for a case study in significance.

Two weeks ago my father's uncle died. For thirty years Josef Albers was the great man of my family. His paintings sell for thousands of dollars. Now that he's dead they'll sell for more. Recognition came late, though. At age eighty he had a one-man show at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. And still he thought he didn't have the recognition he deserved.

This past weekend my father and I attended the memorial services at Yale, where Albers taught design for many years. I am still arranging my impressions of the occasion. The world pays tribute to a great man. (By paying tribute to Rome, you are a part of the Roman Empire. Its greatness is your greatness.) Everyone dresses up in funeral splendour. There are speeches. The artist will live on in his art. The spirit of the teacher will survive in the souls of his students. Everyone has heard these consolations before; everyone pretends they are valid. The director of the Yale University Press spoke at length. The soul of the dead man survives in the sale of his books.

After the service everyone jockeyed for a prominent position near the widow. Intimacy with a great man is almost as good as being great oneself. The widow, my aunt, herself a great woman, shook a hundred hands, then disappeared. The guests went across the street for a reception. No one was received. A toast to Josef Albers was proposed. The guests drank too much.

Only the tears in my grandmother's eyes--between the service and the reception--released me for a moment from my ironic meditations. One old woman's tears outweighed the hypocrisy of hundreds. Am I sentimental? All I know is that I was reluctant to leave my grandmother; and seeing her tears I felt, not anger, but pity for the people around me.

Throughout this charade I felt a hollow in my chest. After all, Albers was my uncle. His greatness was a model for me. If a relative could attain it so could I. But now that greatness had a hollow ring. I could envision my own death, with the same crowd of admirers I hardly knew, bent on extracting a bit of eternity for themselves from the imagined intimacy they shared with the deceased. Is it worth it?

Or is art its own reward? Is there salvation in Beauty? Is beauty Truth? Ernest Becker speaks at length in his book about the artist, but says nothing about beauty. Beauty appeals to the senses; the senses die with the body; so beauty means death. But I doubt if that's what Wallace Stevens means when he says, "Death is the Mother of beauty." Maybe beauty does not please the senses. Maybe it pleases us, through the agency of the senses. Maybe beauty is eternal,



outside our finite existence. I'm swimming in Platonism, and I don't wish to discourse on aesthetics. I wish only to suggest that the human striving after beauty may be more profound than the satisfaction of the senses. Condemned to die, we devote ourselves to the eternal.

I envy the complacency of old men. I imagine myself old, my life behind me, a life of achievement, a life worth the living of it. In Hades only Teiresias is not transparent.

From an automatic door in the brand-new highrise--  
A Facility for Senior Citizens--  
a man with moon-white hair  
follows the sidewalk and steps onto a field.  
He looks at the sun which is sliding  
behind the brand-new airport.  
A jet, two red lights flashing,  
crosses a corner of the sky.  
Silence.

From the same door  
a girl dressed all in white emerges,  
and calls as if she were calling to a dog.  
The dog who is not a dog does not hear her.  
The man with moon-white hair is walking toward the sun.  
When he crosses the field  
he will take the sun in his hand like a gift  
from a granddaughter.

The girl dressed in white  
stands in the light of the sun.  
The light goes right through her.

My vision of complacency is slightly tainted. Retirement homes, the lack of respect from the young, the humiliation and alienation. Still I hope for some final transcendence, but a transcendence rooted in this existence, if that is possible. The sun, here a symbol for death, will be like a "gift from a granddaughter."

I do not speak of immortality, though I find the arguments of Jung and William James convincing. Science gives us basis neither for belief nor disbelief. To believe that nothing follows death is still to believe. It is not yet to know. And if something follows death that has some connection with me as I know me now, I'm sure the differences will outweigh the identities. I had a dream. It is my present vision of the transition called death.

I dreamed that I was on the Jersey shore. Each day my friends and I walked up and down the boardwalk, talking and taking the sun. Each day the men in uniform--soldiers or policemen--watched us silently as we strolled beside the sea. At regular intervals a voice erupted over the public address system. A name was called, a shot rang out, one of the pedestrians fell to the ground. We were accustomed to this regular execution. It was never one of us whose name was called. Dimly we felt that those who fell deserved to die. They had done something wrong. They had brought their death upon them.

We are walking the boardwalk. The familiar voice on the loudspeaker: "Christopher Benfey." I turn to see the guns of the uniformed men trained on me. I have a fleeting sense of guilt. I have committed some forgotten crime, I neglected something years ago, I too deserve my death. I would never plead innocence. I hear the shot. I feel warm, pleasant, comforted. I am yielding. Like Alice I am getting smaller and smaller. I can do nothing, nor do I wish to do anything.



I am a bright light slowly dimming. Soon I will burn out. How could I ever fear death when death is so wonderful, so comforting?

I wake up. My first reaction is disappointment. I am disappointed that I am still alive. No more resignation, no more comfort. Here I am back in the world and nothing is different. Except that I have experienced--if not death--something very like it. And I welcomed it. Or it welcomed me.

When it comes to death, I doubt if the artist has an advantage. Rilke suggests that a poet never really dies. The poet has taken on the identity of Orpheus, the spirit of all poetry. It is an old doctrine. Every poet is one poet. Every poem is part of a single great poem.

We would not trouble  
about other names. Once and for all  
it's Orpheus when there's singing.

(Sonnets to Orpheus, 5)

I wish it were true. But I suppose my conception of poetry is less pure than Rilke's. When Dylan Thomas writes a poem to his father, I like to know it's Dylan Thomas writing a poem to his particular father. It's not Orpheus singing, it's Dylan Thomas. Or it's Thomas singing with a little help from Orpheus, that is to say from art.

Give me a human voice in the poem, not a divine voice. Give me suffering and irony and ugliness and ambivalence and doubt, and turn them into gold. I want to hear a human being singing, singing--as Auden says--"of human unsuccess/ In a rapture of distress." Becker and Camus are tired of heroes; so am I. Give me Joseph Grand, give me a W. B. Yeats who knew he was "silly like us."

Do not let me hear

Of the wisdom of old men, but rather of their folly,  
And not to make us lose faith in humanity, but to teach a little humility. Let us not worship ourselves or our great men. Let us rather whittle at our little phrase and love our neighbor.

I'm not angry at death. As I said earlier, I can't personify it. I can hardly "it" it. Death doesn't exist. Death isn't. Most of all, I am curious--curious about that mysterious moment when I shall cease to be what I now am, that transition that I suspect is more abrupt, more terrifying than the moment to moment transitions my self is subject to. I am curious; and I am content to wait awhile for the moment when my curiosity is satisfied. And when that moment comes, I want to take it in my hand, like a gift. No, that's too easy, too graceful. Here's another way:

Mr. Death, when you came to the ovens it was short  
and to the drowning man you were likewise kind,  
and the nicest of all to the baby I had to abort  
and middling you were to all the crucified combined.  
But when it comes to my death let it be slow,  
let it be pantomime, this last peep show,  
so that I may squat at the edge trying on  
my black necessary trousseau.

(Anne Sexton, "For Mr. Death  
who stands with his door open")

That sounds more like it. There's ugliness in those lines, and irony and guilt. There's humanity. And then there's beauty too. We stumble into death as we always stumble into the unknown, like Dickinson's fly with its "uncertain stumbling Buzz." All we can ask for is a little time to prepare ourselves, a little time to put on our new clothes.

Today is Easter. On the radio "The Messiah" is playing. The scream of an electric drill cuts through the music. Outside the sun is shining in the green leaves. It is a beautiful spring day. Two young girls pass by the window. One is leading the other, who is blindfolded.

THE NEW MEN

1

We are the target.  
We have taught ourselves  
to shoot at ourselves.

We don't say hello  
we say I'm sorry.

We know it's wrong to be a man.  
We don't know how to become women.

The space between our legs swells  
like a question mark.

2

I hear voices  
(mine the loudest) saying:  
You must change yourself.

Underneath an oak tree in late summer  
waiting for dead leaves that do not fall  
I feel different.

The woman with me  
is pleased to find me vulnerable  
eager to trace each error  
of the old wrong walk  
we took together.

I have changed.  
Like leaving the hospital in a wheelchair  
I am cured.

3

We men  
we'll never be the same again.

We cultivate our feminine identity.  
The dark and damp mysterious interior  
creative and concave.

We have hammered hardness out of us.

Behold the new man. See?  
I'm wearing skirts beneath my dungarees.

4

I and a woman lie together  
in the blinding sun.  
And I forget for the hundredth time

the crooked evolution  
of high school pep sessions  
and football games.

Men's eyes prowl after  
cheerleaders and baton twirlers.

They eye us like frightened animals  
deer on the highway.

Danger--men crossing.

5

Brothers  
a new age is dawning.  
We had our time.  
We're old.

Let us retreat to some dark cave.  
We will not make it through the winter.

## THE MOST BEAUTIFUL WOMAN IN THE WORLD

They wanted to know who was the most beautiful woman in the world.  
I took out my billfold and showed them a photograph of Louisa May Alcott.  
They said no she's dead.  
I said well give me a minute to think it over.  
They gave me one and I thought it over.  
I said well gee how about Jackie Kennedy I mean Onassis?  
They said no she's old.  
I thought of the princesses Charles has been dating.  
I tried to think of movie stars  
but could only think of Barbra Streisand.  
How about Barbra Streisand?  
They said no she's Jewish.  
So am I I said.  
They said you ain't beautiful.  
I thought of my wife but thought better of it and said nothing.

The most beautiful woman in the world is not Louisa May Alcott.  
The most beautiful woman in the world is not dead.  
The most beautiful woman in the world is not old.  
The most beautiful woman in the world is not Jewish.  
The most beautiful woman in the world is not my wife.  
I think we are narrowing down the possibilities.

Every creative act is by its very nature individual. The artist creates the structure of his life by his work in progress, and one must wonder at times whether he is creating or being created. Carl Jung said of Goethe, "It is not Goethe who creates Faust, but Faust who creates Goethe."

Brewster Ghiselin, in his introduction to The Creative Process, in speaking of the movement outside consciousness in order to create, said, "The desirable end is not the refreshment of escape into whatever novelty may chance to offer or impose itself, but the discovery of some novelty needed to augment or supplant the existing possessions of the mind." A casting loose of ties of security or the "norm" (wherever that may be), gathering the courage to move alone, departure from the known: all these require some courage as well as their expected eccentricity. Ghiselin calls the creative process "organic," in the sense that it is not an accident nor a wish, but rather a development. Even in the case of "inspiration," the act is not unconscious.

The spontaneity of creativity surely exists, but can we understand whether it is an involuntary production? Or whether it is a strong impulse away from the ordinary--from the conscious?

Even in spontaneity, the mind requires some management. Perhaps this is the most logical conclusion (if, indeed, there is one at all). The consequences of learning and working haphazardly are drastic: there are artists and writers whose lives show that the very least of the problems of spontaneous work are: long stoppages of work; many unfinished pieces; frustrations that breed on each other. Vincent van Gogh is an extraordinary figure in art; although his paintings look to be spontaneous, fresh, colorful, and have a look of freedom to them, he was a man of great discipline and responsibility and devotion. He had much difficulty in finding proper expression of his art--letters to his brother Theo expressed his horror at not knowing the right process, but being painfully aware of the instinct to create. Van Gogh symbolizes that feeling of many artists when there is a bitter and frustrating period of inactivity--seething energy with no outlet. Even when an artist has found a path, a niche, there is still an opposition between the old and the new--often causing the artist to abandon the direction he is taking in favor of starting something fresh.

The desirable end, however, is discovery or invention. Man is born more and more into life--what is inside ripens. Escapism seems flippant and very temporary.

Artists, writers, people of creative endeavor, all have the need of discipline in bringing into their thinking the sense of imagination and creativity they hold in their art. It becomes a part of their whole lives, not just in the studio or at the desk, but in every aspect of living.

Perhaps discipline and management are the logical conclusions to the obvious problems of spontaneity; by finding the way to develop the creative end to be reached--and finding the means to get to that end.

It has been argued whether creativity in art is imitation or invention; or whether it should be one or the other. There are, of course, unconscious developments in creativity, such as dreams or strong memories. Sometimes these make the basis for an artist's or a writer's strong works, if the artist can successfully describe or visualize the memory or the dream or vision. Dreams are a vivid method of bringing the unconscious to light, and have brought enlightenment to many creative "visions."



Etienne Gilson, in Painting and Reality,<sup>1</sup> compares the word "creation" to the word "liberty." The artist weighs the facts, calculates probable consequences, and still does not know how he will ultimately decide. He is most often more highly interested in the process than the end product. This, says Gilson, is the philosophical description of a free act.

Imitation is a difficult point to discern. Aristotle said that Art imitates Nature. This statement usually is interpreted to mean that works of art strive to imitate the visual appearance of the works of Nature--however, Aristotle was probably referring to Medicine when he spoke of art, and Thomas Aquinas interpreted this saying to mean the operations of art imitate the operations of Nature.<sup>2</sup> Thus, we could conclude that in order to learn, man looks at Nature and at the way God does things in Nature. However, the works of Nature are not works of art, so the distinction remains. Art may examine the products of Nature; and in the eyes of artists, it provides a model of the way to operate.

Many artists (once more, van Gogh comes to mind) describe their attitude as one of "internal necessity"--they feel bound to the very form which their own free will chooses to follow. This contrasts to other creative fields, such as philosophy, in that the artist is free to make, while the philosopher is free only to do. [It is not my intention here, however, to glorify art to "divine art"--"Divine art" must be very different. First, our art doesn't create in the proper sense of the word; it does not create its matter, nor even its forms. Human art simply assembles the elements that, once made, have their own forms for the sole reason that they are.]

There is a theory among artists and writers that the world of nature is the world of reality, but it is not in nature that the ultimate reality lies. They feel that there is an underlying reality hidden behind the appearances of nature and it is their function to discover it--or, more definitively, to express it in order to discover it. Edgar Allen Poe refers to the "sense of the beautiful" in speaking of the inconclusiveness of Nature--the sounds, smells, and the forms as well as the feelings from Nature that inspire men.<sup>3</sup> Poe says that "mere repetition is not poetry," and strengthens the conviction that to initiate new realities rather than to expound existing ones is the proper end of the art of writing (or most other art forms, for that matter).

In thinking of the "when" of artistic creativity, and probably the "how," I should like to discuss three different artists. The first is Gertrude Stein. Stein said what has already been partially discussed: that one should think of writing not in terms of result but in terms of discovery. Creation takes place "between the pen and the paper--not before in a thought nor afterwards in a recasting." Stein said writing done in a thought will work, but not in "careful thinking." "It will come if it is there, and if you will let it come . . . you won't know how it was, even what it is, but it will be creation if it came out of the pen and out of you. . . . Technique is not so much a thing of form or style as the way that form or style came and how it can come again."<sup>5</sup> Stein says in her most eloquent style in this conversation with John Preston, that if you know "what you want to get," then you should let it take you wherever it will--that holding back will be a mistake and will only keep you where you have been before, and you will, in her words, "go dry." She emphasizes again and again to "let it run"--to let the fountain go and continue to go--it will continue itself--she calls it "creative recognition."

Stein says also that creative persons cease to become creative when they become "writers." They call themselves writers or poets when they have been good in one or several performances as such, and they cease to be creative. She cites an excellent example: Robert Frost. She says, "If Mr. Robert Frost is at all good as a poet it is because he is a farmer--really in his mind a farmer."<sup>6</sup>

Wassily Kandinsky, quite a different artist, has a vivid approach to his art: on painting, he maintains there are three elements that determine the effects we receive: the action of color; its form; and the object itself, independent of color or form. But, from these three elements, the artist asserts his individuality, and the choice of the object originates from the principle of internal necessity.<sup>7</sup> The freer the abstract form, the purer and perhaps more primitive the vibration. The more an artist uses abstract form, the deeper he will advance into the sphere of the abstract.

Kandinsky maintains that an artist must be able to experience the internal structure of form (whether natural or abstract), so that composition is meaningful--not arbitrary. Aimless alterations in arrangement make art a game. So this is a criterion which is a purely artistic one: the principle of inner necessity.

Kandinsky's own art is an example of this principle--when features of the face or body are changed or distorted for artistic reasons, the result can be just a pictorial question that hampers intention and involves unimportant detail. But, in Kandinsky's case, the unessential disappears and the essential remains. They seem arbitrary, but are well-reasoned alterations and are forms of artistic creation.

A. E. Housman, exercising more sense of humor than Kandinsky, takes a refreshing view of art, when he says that intellect can very well hinder poetry. He gives several illustrations of the "when" of creativity in a passage quoted by Koestler under "Coaxing the Unconscious."<sup>8</sup> He says: "I think that the production of poetry, in its first stage, is less an active than a passive and involuntary process; and if I were obliged, not to define poetry, but to name the class of things to which it belongs, I should call it a secretion; whether a natural secretion, like turpentine in the fir, or a morbid secretion, like the pearl in the oyster. I have seldom written poetry unless I was rather out of health, and the experience, though pleasurable, was generally agitating and exhausting." In another essay, Housman speaks of taking a walk after a relaxing lunch, and letting himself be receptive to the flowing of thoughts into his mind, "with sudden and unaccountable emotion, sometimes a line or two of verse, sometimes a whole stanza . . . then there would usually be a lull of an hour or so, then perhaps the spring would bubble up again."

I believe Kandinsky is to be credited with the separation or division of the three elements of inner necessity, as follows:

- 1) Every artist has in him something which demands expression (thus, the element of personality, or individuality).
- 2) Every artist is impelled to express the spirit of his age and his time (thus, the element of style). This is dictated by the period in which he lives, and, usually, the country he lives in.
- 3) Every artist, as a student of art, helps the cause of art, thus spiritizing the quintessence of art. This is constant among artists, and does not separate ages, times, areas, etc.

It is necessary to understand the first two points or elements (1) and (2) in order to realize the third. An example of an understanding of this principle is that we can judge ancient Chinese or Egyptian art today without bias and strictly as a work of art because it is not restrictive to us of period or personality as it was centuries ago; we can judge it as an eternal art.

The inevitable desire of the objective is what we are defining as "internal necessity." It seems that this impulse is what drives the artist forward. Therefore the inner spirit of art will use the external form of a

particular period as a stepping-stone to further development. We can't (and don't) make limitations for use of form--the artist can use any form that his expression dictates, i.e., his inner impulse must find adequate external form.

Therefore, we may conclude that to seek personality and style deliberately is relatively unimportant, as the external elements (following a school of art, or insistence on a certain medium, for example) may bring misunderstanding and ineffective art. The artist must watch his own inner life and follow the dictates of his internal necessity. Then he may find means to express this mystical necessity.

This inner necessity may be more an ideal than a theory; I cannot distinguish properly, not being a philosopher. It seems, however, in art, that everything is a matter of feeling, and though the general structure may be theorized, there is still the soul of creation around which it is all built. I do not believe that an internal desire for expression can be formulated--true proportions cannot be found that are external in art. Rather, they are within the artist himself--a feeling for boundaries--qualities which are innate, both in a human sense and in a spiritual sense.

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<sup>1</sup>Etienne Gilson, Painting and Reality (Bollingen Series XXXV; New York: Pantheon Books, 1957).

<sup>2</sup>Being and Some Philosophers (2d ed.; Toronto: Toronto Press, 1952).

<sup>3</sup>The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allen Poe, Harvey Allen, Ed. (New York: Modern Library, 1938), p. 893.

<sup>4</sup>John H. Preston, "A Conversation with Gertrude Stein," in The Creative Process, Brewster Ghiselin, Ed. (New York: Mentor Books, 1952), pp. 159-60.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid.                      <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 162.

<sup>7</sup>Wassily Kandinsky, "Concerning the Spiritual in Art," Documents of Modern Art, Vol. V (New York: George Wittenborn, 1955).

<sup>8</sup>Arthur Koestler, The Act of Creation (New York: Dell, 1967), pp. 317-19.



IDENTITY CRISES

1

wading through empty beercans  
overflowing ashtrays    tomato peels  
and sleeping dogs  
I find the bathroom    with a mop holding the door open  
incessant rattle of cheap bathroom fans  
will send me over the brink    someday  
fluorescent light blinding and no toothpaste  
(only some powdery bulk ominous in the corner)

you would say it beats an outhouse  
and I wouldn't answer    (stumped again)

I am reading an old Penthouse magazine  
and staring lightrays through the pages  
slick legs    hot lips    shiny no-clothes  
my head pounds and my stomach tightens  
as you snore on    unconcerned  
all the emptiness in this one little room  
passes out into the hot sun

you will wake and look for a cigarette  
then try to figure out who is    in the bathroom

2

my face has been cut out from the photographs  
and my clothes are put away  
I am a thing of the past    even returning  
though I am questioned politely about  
my present life    I am helpful  
with the dinner though the smell of meat cooking  
sickens me and I lean against the sink

I notice photos of the dead are still here, but mine  
are gone    I have been replaced  
and don't even know it    until I overhear  
the talk of a newer younger version of wife    in  
paperdoll clothes and blonde hair

I want to scream out, it's me!! I'm here!!  
no one would hear    they have forgotten my voice  
too    maybe I really have left and this is  
illusion    it always seemed like  
a strange place anyway



The rising predawn mists were tinged with pink and gold as the three women made final preparations for their shopping trip. An old green pickup idled smoothly in their midst, warming up for the five hour drive from the commune through the mountains to the town on the coast. In the nearby barn curious goats hearing the voices bleated and scrabbled their horns against the wall in hopes of an early feeding.

"Relax, Cadillac," Ivy called in response to an especially plaintive wail. She squatted flat-footed, leaning back against a rear tire. Her long purple ruffled skirt was stuffed between her knees, her chin propped against a fist. Red socks pulled on over a black pair shimmied out boots a half size too large. The toe seam of the left boot was split and gaped like a fish's mouth. "I know we've forgotten something," she said thoughtfully. "But it's not you."

"That's for sure," Dell joked from the cab. "Besides, you goats always want to ride in the front and we're full-up today."

"We've been trying to make this run for a week now," Sara offered, setting a hamper of food in the back, "and I think we'd better leave before somebody wakes up and tries to talk us into letting them use the truck for something else, again."

The three hour drive out of the valley where the ranch lay hidden to the first straight level road passed quickly. Sara drove leaning intently over the steering wheel as the truck accelerated with a roar that precluded conversation at more than 45 miles an hour. Dell and Ivy were just beginning to nod off when Sara took her foot from the gas pedal. The truck immediately dropped its speed by ten miles an hour. "What's happening?" Ivy asked as she grabbed at the dash.

"Just picking up a hitch-hiker," Sara said, beginning to smile broadly, although the figure was still a quarter mile away.

"Oh no, take a look at this guy," Dell gasped with a sound of mild alarm. The hitcher carried a large pack and still unaware of the truck, plodded along with a heavy loose tramp requiring a maximum of energy. Hearing the truck approach he spun on one foot and began waving his arm in the air thumb extended, as if flagging by a racing car in slow motion. "It's not too late yet, Sara," Dell urged. "You can still put it in second gear and get by him."

"But he needs a ride," Sara answered with a mixed look of consternation and intent.

The man continued to wave his arm, while looking at a spot four feet above his head and ten feet in front of him for several seconds after the truck had pulled to a halt. "Far out," he said with cordial respect when his eyes focused on the three women. "I'm not going far," he continued distractedly. "I'll climb in the back and bang on the top when I want out." With a grin he handed Ivy a joint through the open window and made his way into the bed of the truck, from where he continued to stare at the same spot, which now followed behind the truck.

Sara shifted into high gear and held her speed down so she could shout to Dell. "Why didn't you want to pick that guy up? He was all right, just a little fucked up."

"Speaking of fucked up, that's what I want to get," Ivy said, cupping a match to the joint.

"Yeah, he's all right I guess," Dell conceded with a shrug. "But I just naturally get nervous. I mean black women get some strange reactions when they go driving around America. After a while you get to feeling like everybody might be the original axe murderer."

Ivy passed the joint, holding her breath before blowing a cloud of smoke against the windshield. "Mmm, that man's carrying some good doobie," she said a little breathlessly. "No wonder he's so fucked up." Suddenly the engine coughed and cut out, caught and died again for good.

"Sounds like we're out of gas," Sara said. The gauge read half full. "But I'm sure we have gas. It must be something else."

The truck pulled to a stop on the wide dirt shoulder of the road. The three women climbed from the cab and the passenger from the rear. His back was straight. His eyes were focused and if not clear at least present. He had the air of one about to be restored, like a man in bad need of a drink who had just walked into his favorite bar. An ace mechanic, he had in less than ten minutes located the trouble in the fuel pump. Using the single tool aboard, a screwdriver, he dismantled the pump enough to clean its filter and they were underway again.

\* \* \* \* \*

The shopping went quickly, in the usual order of hamburgers first and everything else after. Soon thirty dozen baby chicks in shipping crates were peeping away in the bed of the truck. "Look at that," Ivy said, glancing at a clock as they paid for the chicks and feed. "It's not quite noon and we're practically on our way back home. That's what speed, efficiency and getting up at four in the morning will get you."

They had driven a block when the engine stuttered and the truck began to cough its way down the street at a ragged ten miles an hour. "Here we go again," Sara observed ruefully as Ivy wheeled the truck into an off the street parking slot of a shopping center.

They peered under the hood in an uncertain silence until Dell spoke. "Once before I was in a truck that made that same noise. I remember somebody saying it was the needle valve," she said with a laugh, finding herself grasping at steel straws in a state of nearly pristine ignorance.

Ivy pointed incriminatingly. "I know that's in the carburator and there's the carburator. I also know we have enough money left for gas home and three dollars for expenses. It looks like this is going to be our expense," she added, her mouth tightening into an I've-been-here-before expression.

"I've never been in a situation before when I couldn't go buy a new carburator if I wanted," Dell said, taking her hands from the pockets of her faded lavender overalls and leaning forward to watch Sara straining across the fender with the screwdriver, trying to get at the carburator.

I guess this is where we start," Sara said, blinking a little at the light as she pulled her head from under the hood. "But I can't reach in there with this dress on." She climbed into the back of the truck and in a minute stepped back out wearing a pair of worn jeans and an old plaid shirt, both several sizes too large.

"I wonder if you can take a carburator off with a screwdriver," she speculated abstractly as she climbed across the fender and under the hood, squatting in the engine well next to the carburator.

"Uh, Sara, I've never seen--I don't ever remember seeing anyone climb inside the engine before," Dell commented tentatively.

"I can't reach it from out there," Sara explained. "I don't think

we can afford a rebuilt carburator, or even a kit--they do have kits, don't they?" she questioned. "Haven't I heard that phrase, carburator kit?" She handed the air cleaner out to Dell and climbed out herself. "It looks to me as if that's as far as I can go without wrenches. We'll know better than to leave again without tools."

"First we have to take the carburator out," Ivy reasoned. "Then we've got to figure out some way to fix it for three dollars."

A long haired man driving an old stake bed truck loaned his tools while he spent the afternoon shopping. The three women worked quietly. Dell and Ivy leaned across the fender, handing in and retrieving dropped tools, while Sara made herself as comfortable as possible under the hood and focused her attention on removing the carburator. They drew a steady trickle of observers, one leaving at about the time the next set came, drawn by feelings as diverse as admiration, casual lust, bewilderment and curiosity.

"I sure wish my old lady could see you," a man voiced.

"Why don't you just leave it?" a young woman on her lunch break asked. "You can always come back later with a man."

"Even if we were totally irresponsible," Dell explained simply, "there is no way we can go anywhere without this truck."

"Hey Christine," a guy called. "Take a look at what these women are doing," he said enthusiastically to the young woman with him.

Christine looked as if she had just spotted a stuffed toad. "I don't give a shit," she said without a trace of interest.

Close to three hours later the three walked into a parts store. The glass door shut behind them, tripping a bell that brought the parts man from the back. Sara held the carburator out toward him in both hands like a greasy brass and nickel sacrifice. "It doesn't work," she said with a helpless shrug and a warm grin.

"We think it might be the needle valve," Dell added seriously. A moment later she burst out laughing at the incongruity of advising the parts man. "I mean," she laughed, "once I was in a truck that sounded like this and they said needle valve . . ."

"We've only got three dollars," Ivy said slowly. "Do you think you could fix it for that?"

The parts man, an old hand in a profession that habituates one to tales of fearful, ignorant and desperate mechanical woe, looked at the three women for a moment, sizing them up as they stood quietly for the first time. "Let's hope the trouble's in your carburator," he said taking the part from Sara. He inspected the carburator for a minute, muttering a mystifying stream of numbers and letters as he looked it over. "I'll clean it and replace the gaskets for three dollars," he said, still examining the carburator. "You can pay me if the truck runs when you put it back on."

"While you're working on it we'll go try to find some tools to put it on with," Ivy said gratefully.

"Take it easy," the parts clerk responded, hardly able to believe his own voice. "I'll loan you my tools. Bring 'em back when you pay."

They walked from the store to the truck, taking out a box of food. Under a tree in a small square in the shopping center they ate mackerel sandwiches on thick slices of crumbly home made bread that had to be held together, and passed around a half gallon of warm fresh goat's milk still tasting of sunshine and dark honey.

The women finished eating and arranged themselves in a triangle, sitting cross legged with their knees touching one another. They went into the alpha state, responding to the situation on a psychological and other than



ordinary plane. Ivy visualized the parts man cleaning the carburator with the coordination of a safe cracker and the concentration of a brain surgeon.

Dell relaxed her mind into a trance state, cutting out outside sounds, telling herself that she felt good, rested, strong.

Sara poured psychic energy into a vividly conjured image of herself replacing the carburator with a complete sense of confidence. Each operation arranged itself into a logical sequence in relation to the steps preceding and following it.

They all visualized themselves getting into the truck and driving away without a hitch.

\* \* \* \* \*

"We'll be half way home before it gets dark," Ivy observed, turning to glance at the sun which swung slowly behind them as Dell wheeled the truck through a gentle series of slow climbing curves. "Just about right for not having to worry about logging trucks." Ivy reached into a sock, coming up with a flourished flattened, gently curved joint.

Dell shifted down as they began climbing a long steep grade. Each of the women took a deep quick first hit so that for a time the truck ran without conversation up the broad straight highway as all three held their breath simultaneously, soaking up the dope like thirsty sponges.

Sara exhaled, blowing a thin fast jet of smoke against the windshield. Ivy took the joint again, repaired a seam, knocked off the ash and said with a contented chuckle, "Sisters, listen to them engines roar."





## WORDS

They pack my head  
 like colored gumballs.  
 "Insert your pennies.  
 We are at your disposal to  
 tell you what the matter is,  
 why you hurt,  
 label your problem.  
 We paste names on gnawings;  
 order torn innards  
 like smooth puzzle edges."

At two a.m. they are jumping beans  
 that leap-frog  
 to raise their learned hands  
 and tell me why  
 I'm flattened in bed--  
 the lamp searing,  
 crackling nothing  
 into my bones.  
 They tumble in the walls,  
 those plastic alphabets.  
 Box me neatly with  
                   topic outlines  
                   sub-divisions  
                   cross-references.

Some day, when they  
 have me squared away--  
 all tidy in my wrapper,  
 I'll shell myself,  
 unpod those words.  
 Plop them into a  
 bucket at my feet  
 one  
 by  
 one  
 little bloodied heads.

John Webster's The Duchess of Malfi is for most readers at least as baffling as it is fascinating. The strictures of the Duchess' brothers against her remarriage, and their subsequent revenge for her disobedience, never really make sense. How is it that a love as genuine as Antonio Bologna's and the Duchess' seems to be leads to such insane abuse and such cruel punishment? Webster's play indicates, quite simply, that misery and death befall all who participate in the human condition, and that a scheme of reason or justice is not to be found in this world. Order and justice can be found only in the realm of the Ideal, and it is useful to examine the fate of Antonio and the Duchess in the light of the most famous Renaissance expression of the ideal state, Baldesar Castiglione's court of Urbino.

The center of Urbino's court was its Duchess, whom Castiglione portrays not as an active character in The Book of the Courtier, but rather as a presiding presence, a being superior in the full platonic sense to the ladies and gentlemen of the court who reflect her near perfection. Castiglione claims that he has represented her in this way because as a writer and as a courtier he could not imitate her virtues: "not only is my style incapable of expressing them, but my mind cannot even conceive them."<sup>1</sup> The more perfect something is, according to the theory, the more difficult it is to imagine--hence Castiglione's oblique representation of the exceptional virtue of his Duchess, whom he loved not just as the Ideal Courtier was supposed to love his lady, but more importantly, as he was supposed to love his prince. The principal argument of The Book of the Courtier, which was his tribute to her memory, is that where one finds a courtier able to enhance the virtuous education of his prince, one finds a kingdom resembling the ideal state. Castiglione's Urbino, with its already virtuous Duke and Duchess, represents such a state; Castiglione himself--though he failed in real life to advise princes successfully--is generally seen as an ideal Renaissance courtier.

Probably it is mere coincidence that the historical Antonio Bologna became major-domo to the Duchess of Amalfi just about the time the Urbino dialogs were supposed to have taken place.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, there are unmistakable reflections of Castiglione's book on courtiership in The Duchess of Malfi which enhance our appreciation of Antonio as his lady's courtier-servant. The play begins with Antonio's return from France, and his opinion of its court is a description couched in terms very like those used by the Urbino courtiers as they described the ideal state. Says Antonio,

In seeking to reduce both State, and People  
To a fix'd Order, the[ir] juditious King  
Begins at home: Quits first his Royall Pallace  
Of flattring Sicophants, of dissolute,  
And infamous persons--which he sweetely termes  
His Masters Master-peece (the worke of Heaven)  
Considring duely, that a Princes Court  
Is like a common Fountaine, whence should flow  
Pure silver-droppes in generall: But if't chance  
Some curs'd example poyson't neere the head,  
"Death, and diseases through the whole land spread.  
And what is't makes this blessed government,  
But a most provident Councell, who dare freely  
Informe him the corruption of the times?

Though some oth'Court hold it presumption  
To instruct Princes what they ought to doe,  
It is a noble duty to informe them  
What they ought to fore-see: (I, i, 6-23).

In recognizing the duty of a courtier to instruct his prince in the ways of righteousness, Antonio cites the principal obligation of the Ideal Courtier. Moreover, he is in other ways a respectable imitator of that concept. He is an accomplished horseman (it was he who "tooke the Ring oftneft" [I, i, 90]), and when Prince Ferdinand asks his opinion of good horsemanship, he replies with all the wit and eloquence of the Urbino courtiers: "Noblely (my Lord)--as out of the Grecian-horse, issued many famous Princes: So, out of brave Horse-man-ship, arise the first Sparkes of growing resolution, that raise the minde to noble action" (I, i, 144-47). Even the Duchess expresses admiration of Antonio's virtues: "If you will know where breathes a compleat man,/ (I speake it without flattery) turne your eyes,/ And progresse through your selfe" (I, i, 500-502). Antonio himself admits, "I have long serv'd vertue,/ And nev'r tane wages of her" (I, i, 504-505), but the ultimate testimony of his virtuous nature is the Cardinal's rejection of him as the intelligencer set to spy upon the Duchess: "His Nature is too honest for such businesse" (I, i, 242). Instead, the Cardinal chooses Daniel de Bolosa as his spy.

Webster's portrait of Antonio as an imitator of the Ideal Courtier is made complete by Antonio's description of the Duchess, which (given to his friend Delio) betrays the depths of his devotion to his prince:

For her discourse, it is so full of Rapture,  
You onely will begin, then to be sorry  
When she doth end her speech: and wish (in wonder)  
She held it lesse vaine-glory, to talke much,  
Then your pennance, to heare her: whilst she speakes,  
She throwes upon a man so sweet a looke,  
That it were able to raise one to a Galliard  
That lay in a dead palsey; and to doate  
On that sweete countenance: but in that looke,  
There speaketh so divine a continence,  
As cuts off all lascivious, and vaine hope.  
Her dayes are practis'd in such noble vertue,  
That sure her nights (nay more her very Sleepes)  
Are more in Heaven, then other Ladies Shifts.  
Let all sweet Ladies breake their flattring Glasses,  
And dresse themselves in her (I, i, 194-209).

Antonio's words echo Castiglione's commendation of his own Duchess who, "in impressing herself thus upon those about her, it seemed that she tempered us all to her own quality and fashion, wherefore each one strove to imitate her style, deriving, as it were, a rule of fine manners from the presence of so great and virtuous a lady" (I, [4], 16).

Given the platonic context of Antonio's situation--a context portrayed so beautifully in The Book of the Courtier--one can understand his astonishment when his Duchess offers herself in marriage to him as the wages of his virtue. She seems to fuse the best of the abstract, ideal, realm with the tangible and concrete. While Socrates indeed had not denied physical love to the true lovers he described in the Phaedrus, it would seem that Antonio has the rare opportunity to enjoy the sweet descent of platonic into physical love, his prince's ultimate favor, and a most gratifying reward for the faithful and loving service he has rendered. One cannot doubt for a moment that the love between the



Duchess of Malfi and Antonio is genuine, at once tender and passionate--and yet the physical consummation of that love marks their remove from the realm of abstract perfection into the state of humanity, which is to make them subject to pain, misery, and death. The transition from Urbino to Amalfi makes Antonio representative of all would-be Ideal Courtiers. To live in this world, one must be human, and that is to suffer as Antonio and his beloved mistress suffer.

Like many readers of the play, editor F. L. Lucas is highly critical of Antonio's failure to cut a bolder figure, and he feels that ". . . Antonio is not good enough for the woman he has won."<sup>3</sup> This seems rather harsh; for Antonio is better than everyone except the woman he has won, and she maintains a superiority which distinguishes her from the rest of human kind. Amidst the madness and grief which life in this world inflicts upon her and (less dramatically) upon all of us, she retains her integrity--manifest in her famous declaration "I am Duchesse of Malfy still" (IV, ii, 139). In a platonic sense she is superior to us all; spiritually she rises above Fortune, just as Castiglione's Duchess had done: ". . . Fortune, as if admiring such rare virtues, chose to reveal through many adversities and stings of calamity, in order to prove that in the tender breast of a woman, and accompanied by singular beauty, there may dwell prudence and strength of spirit, and all those virtues which are very rare even in austere men." (I, [4], 16-17). The point is, each Duchess is both lady and prince.

So it is that the Duchess of Malfi does not fail to grant Antonio the superiority which is his as husband. "Indeed," he observes, "my Rule is onely in the night" (III, ii, 10). The Duchess' full participation in the human condition makes her the subject of Antonio, albeit only in the private world which excludes everyone and everything but themselves. The pity is, they cannot preserve that private world. Amalfi must be ruled by its Duchess, whose public responsibilities require her maintenance of the social order. Her marriage to her steward in one sense violates that order, and yet that marriage constitutes a social order which is more nearly perfect--except that it is also mortal. Ultimately, the Duchess of Malfi's heroism lies in her retention of both her integrity and her love for her husband; prince and lady, she endures her wicked brothers' tortures, and in death transcends the meanness and bitterness of human life.

"It is understandable that I should feel sorrow far more bitter for the death of the Duchess than for any of the others," wrote Castiglione near the end of his life, "because she was worth more than the others, and I was much more bound to her than to all the rest" (Preface, [1], 2-3).

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<sup>1</sup>Baldesar Castiglione, The Book of the Courtier, trans. Charles S. Singleton (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1959), Preface, [1], p. 3. All quotations from The Book of the Courtier are keyed to this volume.

<sup>2</sup>F. L. Lucas, "Historical Introduction: Webster's Sources," The Complete Works of John Webster (London: Chatto & Windus, 1927), V. II, p. 9. All quotations from The Duchess of Malfi are from Lucas' edition.

<sup>3</sup>Lucas, "The Play," *ibid.*, p. 22.

SPRING LIMIT

He slipped the chain  
behind the bass' lower lip,  
let it slide into the current  
swirling around him.

He nearly had the limit.

The sun was above the ridge,  
the mist rose in wisps.  
On clear mornings this was his time.

He liked feeling his way in the current.

From here there was no evidence of the flood:  
"Gone as quick as it come," she'd said,  
standing in their ruined field.

He was standing in swift water  
casting upstream near the edge  
into a slow back-current.

He missed a lot of strikes.

He'd go back to the truck mines,  
hating the dark, 'd draw rocking chair  
through the winter, help haul coal.

The strike came as lure and fish  
completed a circle extending from him,  
shattering the interface.

Felt like he'd hooked the river.

He'd been baptized in this river,  
was still surprised with its viciousness.

A SEWER IN BLUEFIELD, W. VA.

Even then it was a sewer.  
They called it that,  
and it had the look of a sewer:

gray algae waved in the riffles,  
oil cans strewn bank and bottom  
and broken bottles lay like steel traps.

I dropped a crayfish in once  
and never saw him again.

In the summer if I sat long and quiet  
in the weeds along the edge  
a rat would slip past  
inside the criss-cross grass  
smooth as a snake;  
a shiver always gave me away.

Our cat hunted there too  
and left his dead at the front door  
until once he never came home.

That sewer called kids  
like the pied piper  
so the parents raised a stink.  
I was warned of dread disease.

But the riffles had rainbows  
(thanks to the oil, of course)

and there was a monstrous  
black heart cherry tree  
clinging by its roots to the bank;

in the spring I could create a snowstorm,  
perched high, shaking blossoms  
onto the black water.

A ground hog lived under those roots  
until a flood caught him in his sleep.

Even then it was a sewer  
but hearing it again as I just did  
under the sidewalk  
it struck me  
that it had always sounded like a creek.

M A R Y   W A K E M A N :     METAMORPHIC ROCK AND BREAKING WATER: Or,  
What has the Bible to do with Religion?

I feel a little like my friend who, in preparing to teach a course on Islam, remarked about himself: "Such a thing for a nice Jewish boy to be an expert in!" What is a mad feminist woman like me doing studying the Bible? What can a book written by men for men about men have to say to me? Am I just snooping, as I used to, standing behind the door of my brother's room in hopes of overhearing something useful? They had disappointingly little to say that was really about me. Fantasies, in which sometimes it wasn't clear whether they were talking about mother, or about God; racy stories about some woman one of them knew who would do anything. Sometimes they would plot to avoid me, by engaging me in "hide and seek." They didn't want me messing up their games. Nothing interesting. I would leave the door, as I leave the women of the Bible, and as I leave even the passages prescribing woman's proper sphere of activity. They don't apply to me. I never really wanted to play my brother's games anyway.

To get at what does interest me, it is necessary to take into account something analogous to the precession of the equinoxes, that enabled Egyptologists to account for the situation of Egyptian temples in the third millennium B.C. If you allow for the "wobble of the earth's axis round the pole of the heavens"<sup>1</sup> it becomes clear that they were built so as to catch the light of the dog star when it rose with the sun, telling the priests that the Nile had begun to flood. The "something analogous" involves a chiasitic shift, as suggested by the title. God has been the rock of salvation over against the flood of chaos; the fountain of living waters that swept away the idolater's rock of stumbling. But water breaks, in giving birth. The figure of flowing rock as an image of our present has the advantage that it is continuous with the biblical way of speaking about order and chaos at the same time that it cuts across the traditional dichotomies, obliterating old boundary lines and opening up new possibilities of construction.

As I look back along this fault line, I am struck by a startling alignment: the relation of the women's movement in our time, to the prophetic movement of the 8th to 6th centuries B.C. in Palestine.

Who am I saying are today's prophets? All, and only, women? Kathryn Kuhlman? Ourselves, here? Are we believers? Let us go right to the heart of it, to those who are wholly committed, who love the institution whose business it is to conserve the male-dominated tradition: to women priests.

At a conference in Washington in September 1975,<sup>2</sup> Lee McGee and Allison Palmer, recently ordained Episcopal priests, spoke of their experience. What I will try to do here, is to recreate parts of the conversation, including my own asides, as an exercise in very selective memory, in hopes of clarifying my idea. I got into this business of studying the Bible quite by accident and have never had much interest in the church, so I sat at some distance from these women. But perhaps you will hear echoes, as I did, both of yourselves, and of Hosea, Jeremiah, and the rest.

"Why did you seek ordination?"

"I recognized that I was in fact exercising the priestly function, which had emerged out of a lack of structure in the community, and I needed to sacramentalize events in the lives of individuals, to affirm them, with the authority of the church."



"What were the difficulties you encountered?"

Lee spoke of her deep pain, which grew out of her love for the church as the body of Christ--(How does she imagine that? Why isn't there a sense of self-alienation, for a woman, in that image?)--the pain of recognizing that it would take the church at least twenty years to fully acknowledge her priesthood. Accepting that her vocation would always be uncomfortable and angry, she grieved as for a death; again, it hurt that people in her community decided on the bishop's recommendation not to attend her ordination. Letting go the affirmation of the community was another kind of death, followed by grief, and then acceptance.

Allison said her attempt to resist her vocation was the darkest period of her life. "I didn't want it, he wanted it." (At this point my speculation that, well, they must be thinking of God and Christ as inner images of themselves--the gender issue is irrelevant for some people--was exploded. The maleness of the image was quite clear.)

"Had you wished to become a priest?"

"No, there was a sense of being led, but surprisingly. A sense of alienation, like a fish out of water, learning to move where there were no precedents."

There was no doubting their genuineness. I think it was here that I began to see analogies with the prophets.

Cornelia Dimmit pointed out that their inability to think about the possibility or to have ambitions to priesthood was related to the bishop's inability to accept it. Hostility to the idea of women priests is located at a deep psychological-symbolic level. We can't get away from the fact that when a woman says "This is my blood" it means something different (quite possibly because the symbols of blood and water referred to female functions in the first place) than when a man says it. This was Nelle Morton's contribution. She also remarked that to raise the question of female priest is to raise the question of male priest and therefore to raise the question of priest altogether. The whole question of making symbolic use of persons is involved in that.

"Didn't you wonder how God can speak to a woman?"

"No, my question was: how can he do this to me?"

The self-concept implied by this response testifies to changes in society as a whole that have taken place, such that women may expect to participate in top leadership positions. Here in a brilliant flash of insight I burst out with my own naive grasp of the situation: "What women's priesthood is going to do is destroy the church!" To which one responded, "It's not my place to ask what's going to happen if women are priests." And the other, "I'm sure I am to be where I am now, but I'm not sure what that's going to do to the institution shaped by white anglosaxon affluent males." (Here I wrote in: the university.) "I am responsible to wrestle through my own inner conflict. I am not responsible to calculate the future. . . . The irregularity of the ordination is as important as the sense of having arrived. Thank God there were people in a position, and ready, to affirm that: Women testifying to a different kind of authority. . . . The church does not have the power of shaping my vocation. I must remain autonomous as a person if I am not to be a tool of the church . . . . We accept being peripheral people."

"Why do you choose to stay in the church?"

"Its structures and ritual are useful. You have to be in a position

to give new gifts; most importantly, it is a matter of personal history: that is where I find myself now."

To me theirs appears clearly to be, as was the prophet's, a positively destructive mission, which I can best define with reference to the snake that sheds its skin: The destructive act of bursting the old skin is affirmative in that it testifies to faith in the new skin to hold. New direction comes from those who suffer through the contradictions of the time in their own selves; who accept the authority of their own experience, and so provide it for others; who do not calculate the future in an attempt to anticipate or forestall it, but whose faith in it directs them to address the conflict of the moment with their whole lives. (This comparison raises the question of the Old Testament prophets' relation to the cult in a new way: Did they too experience themselves as priests, and find that their ministry was subversive? The power of their word issues out of the agony of their deep commitment to the institutions of Israel, and the realization that Israel was to be found only on the periphery.) Lee said, "We embody ourselves. We become a community that can celebrate the Eucharist. We become the church of the faithful forming around the woman-priest, to become visible to one another."

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Let me return to the question: What has the Bible to do with religion, for me? Naomi Goldenberg asked, "Why do you need tradition at all?" As a matter of personal history, I've got it, and my task is to figure out what to do with it. If I look at it askew, I can find validation for the religious dimension of my experience as a feminist in the biblical tradition, though I don't need to. By askew, I mean that if I realize that the biblical world is one voice in a conversation, and that the other speaks out of the tension between two value systems, then I can catch sight of the life, and loveliness, of the snake between the skins. If I can appreciate how the idea that woman is to man as the church is to Christ (Eph. 5:23) is dependent on Hosea's figure of Israel as the bride of Yahweh, and how the development of that figure was dependent on the symbolic world of the fertility cult that it was intended to subvert, then I can see the women's movement against sexism altogether, in which the church is confronted with the contradictory figure of the woman priest, as continuous with the biblical tradition. The break with sexism runs parallel to the break with the fertility cult, at the same time that it cuts across the values that emerged from the work of the prophets. Nelle said, "It's not that the church has become too much like the world, but that the world has become too much like the church." Christianity burst the old hierarchy by democratizing sacred marriage ("Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord" Eph. 5:22), but now sexism has permeated every aspect of culture. It has become big business rather than a vehicle for spiritual growth.

The language we speak is as dependent on the language of those to whom it is addressed as was the prophets'. And like theirs, it has roots in the past. For the prophets, in the traditions of the covenant federation that preceded the monarchy; for us, in the tradition of the prophets who preceded the church. Cultural history seems to be a game of leap frog, or perhaps a rolling spiral in which what was under comes up. As Anne Bennett once said, "The movement for personhood keeps surfacing over and over again," but its style changes to suit the particular stage of the conversation. In so far as feminism refers to a way of looking at the world which rejects sex-role stereotyping it includes men as well as women. The difference becomes important in considering the ways in which men and women can act to use the symbolic load that attaches to their sex to subvert the whole sexist order, as for instance when a woman priest celebrates the Eucharist.

The sexual metaphor, with all its attendant dehumanization, has been the major symbol for the progression of the soul since time immemorial. To cease to be so, it must be violated, in as shocking a way as Hosea violated the symbol of sacred marriage by speaking of the people, rather than the Goddess, as the bride of God. And this can best be accomplished by people who find themselves to be living at the cross-point of tension between the two "skins."

What will take its place? New forms, different for each of us, will emerge, under the tremendous pressure of earth forces: the heat of anger, moisture of tears, wrenching of self-contradiction. We cannot predict what they will be. Our task is to deal as firmly, as imaginatively, as bravely as we can with the present moment in all its ambiguity.

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<sup>1</sup>Norman Lockyer, The Dawn of Astronomy: A Study of the Temple Worship and Mythology of the Ancient Egyptians (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T.Press, 1964 [1894]), p. 125.

<sup>2</sup>"The Feminine in Religion," September 12-14, 1975, organized by members of the Georgetown University Religious Studies faculty, at the College of Preachers in Washington, D.C.

THREE WOMEN

Three women sat in the dark room  
In a row on the edge of the bed.  
The light from the outside  
Came in, making patterns  
On their faces as they  
Reflected the patterns  
Of the plants.

The two women on the sides  
Supported the woman  
In the middle while she cried.  
They supported each other  
While they cried.  
They all cried.

They were all whores, and  
They were all angels.  
Whores and angels who cried  
And held each other,  
And understood.  
They loved each other in  
The darkness, and understood  
The pain of the light.

He had written poems  
About despair, but had  
Failed to understand the pain.



## C O N T R I B U T O R S

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